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Editorial address:
Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore
Vanemuise 42–235
51003 Tartu
Estonia
phone: +372 737 7740
fax: +372 737 7706
e-mail: folklore@folklore.ee
home page: http://www.folklore.ee/folklore

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DO BULGAKOV'S HELLA (GELLA), AZAZELLO, BEHEMOTH, AND ABADONNA HAVE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ORIGINS?

Vladimir Sazonov
Associate Professor in Ancient Near Eastern Studies
Centre for Oriental Studies, Institute of Cultural Research
University of Tartu, Estonia
vladimir.sazonov@ut.ee

Sirje Kupp-Sazonov
Lecturer in Russian Language and Translation Studies
Department of Translation and Interpretation Studies
College of Foreign Languages and Cultures, University of Tartu, Estonia
sirje.kupp-sazonov@ut.ee

Abstract: This paper[1] focuses on the issue of the possible Ancient Near Eastern origins of famous Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov's demonic characters, such as the vampire Hella (Gella), the cat-human Behemoth, and the demons Azazello and Abadonna from the novel *The Master and Margarita*. The nature of the members of Woland's court have been analysed in several works; however, their roots are usually considered to go back to biblical times and context. Our aim is to try to shed some light on their possibly more ancient origins, since it is a well-known fact that Bulgakov was deeply interested in the Ancient Near East and used several of its elements in his novel. Therefore, in order to establish any potential Ancient Near Eastern impact on the essence of those characters, we need to look into Akkadian and Sumerian mythology and Mesopotamian religious texts (e.g., incantations).

Keywords: Abadonna, Ancient Near East, Azazello, Behemoth, demons, Hella (Gella), Mikhail Bulgakov, The Master and Margarita

INTRODUCTION

Mikhail Bulgakov (1891–1940), one of the most prominent Russian writers of the twentieth century, began writing his probably most famous novel, *The Master and Margarita*, in 1928, and continued to work on it until his death

in 1940. It is believed that the author destroyed the first manuscript in 1930 (about the different redactions of the novel see M. Chudakova's article (1976)). For many years Bulgakov tried to find a suitable title and considered different versions, for example, *The Great Chancellor*, *The Black Theologian*, *The Hoof of the Advisor*, etc. He finally decided on the current title in 1937. In 1966 the first part of the novel, heavily censored, was published in the monthly magazine *Moskva*; the second part appeared at the beginning of the following year. It has been said that approximately 12% of the text was left out of these first publications. The first uncensored version in Russian was published in Paris in 1967 and in Frankfurt in 1969. In the Soviet Union the first uncensored version was published only in 1973. For a long time, the Estonian translation that was published in 1968 remained the only book version of the novel in the Soviet Union.[2]

Since the second half of the 1960s, this novel has been translated into many languages. There exist several English translations of it (e.g., Mirra Ginsburg 1967; Michael Glenny 1967 and 1992; Diana Burgin & Katherine Tiernan O'Connor 1993; Richard Pevear & Larissa Volokhonsky 1997; Michael Karpelson 2006; Hugh Aplin 2008; John Dougherty 2017), and critics have very different opinions about those versions (see May 1998). In our article examples from Michael Glenny's translation (1992) are used.

This article focuses on Ancient Near Eastern origin of some characters, but in fact, Bulgakov used many different oriental phenomena and motifs in his most famous novel. The importance of Near Eastern motifs in *The Master and Margarita* becomes immediately apparent right at the beginning of the novel, when the author mentions Ancient Near Eastern deities, such as the Mesopotamian god Marduk (Sommerfeld 1982; Johandi 2016, 2019), Osiris of Egypt, the Phoenician-Mesopotamian Tammuz, Sumerian Dumuzi, etc.

> *Berlioz's high tenor resounded along the empty avenue and as Mikhail Alexandrovich picked his way round the sort of historical pitfalls that can only be negotiated safely by a highly educated man, the poet learned more and more useful and instructive facts about the Egyptian god Osiris, son of Earth and Heaven, about the Phoenician god Thammuz, about Marduk and even about the fierce little-known god Vitzli-Putzli, who had once been held in great veneration by the Aztecs of Mexico.* (p. 4)

Not only deities but also other important Near Eastern phenomena are introduced on the first pages of the novel; for example, the religion of Zoroastrianism (Stausberg 2002–2004; Boyce 1979), the month of Nisannu, when the New Year celebration – Akitu-festival (Sommer 2000) – took place.

One can suggest at least two main reasons for Bulgakov's interest in the Ancient Near East. Firstly, he was well educated in theology since his father was an associate professor at the Theological Academy in Kiev and Bulgakov read his father's papers when he was working on *The Master and Margarita*. However, there is no reason to assume that Bulgakov knew any Ancient Near Eastern languages; he was a medical doctor. One can suggest that he probably read about the Ancient Near Eastern culture, history, deities, demons, etc., in popular scientific literature.[3]

Secondly, at the beginning of the twentieth century there was great interest in Ancient Near East history and culture in the Russian Empire, as well as in the rest of Europe. Bulgakov was also a good friend of Anna Akhmatova (for more see Pavlovskii 1988), who showed great interest in the Ancient Near East and whose second husband was Voldemar (Vladimir) K. Shileiko (1891–1930), who was born in the same year as Bulgakov (see Emelianov 2019: 60–88) and was a famous Russian professor and author of many scientific papers on Assyriological studies, as well as translator of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, prominent scholar and poet (for more see Emelianov 2019; Sallaberger 2008). Undoubtedly, Bulgakov had several possible sources for his Ancient Near East inspiration in the process of writing his famous novel.

In the current article we will focus on the origin of four creatures (members of Woland's court) from *The Master and Margarita*:

1) the female vampire Hella (Gella) (see Sazonov & Kupp-Sazonov 2020);
2) the demon Azazello;
3) Behemoth, the enormous cat who can transform into human shape (see Sazonov & Kupp-Sazonov 2021);
4) Abadonna, the demon of war.

HELLA (GELLA)[4]

Hella is depicted in Bulgakov's novel as one of the living dead, a demon, and a female vampire. She is described in the following ways:

> *The two robbers vanished and in their place appeared* ***a completely naked girl – a redhead with eyes that burned with a phosphorescent glitter.***[5] *… The girl came right up to him and put her hands on his shoulders. … 'Let me give you a kiss,' said the girl tenderly, her gleaming eyes close to his. Varenukha lost consciousness before he could feel her kiss.*[6] (p. 125)

> *The girl increased her efforts, pushed her auburn head through the little upper pane, stretched out her arm as far as she could and began to pluck at the lower catch with her fingernails and shake the frame. Her arm,* ***coloured deathly green****,* ***started to stretch as if it were made of rubber****. Finally her* ***green cadaverous fingers*** *caught the knob of the window-catch, turned it and the casement opened. …* ***The walking corpse*** *stepped on to the window-sill. Rimsky clearly saw* ***patches of decay on her breast****. At that moment the sudden, joyful sound of a cock crowing rang out in the garden …* ***Wild fury distorted the girl's face as she swore hoarsely*** *… The cock crowed again, the girl* ***gnashed her teeth*** *and* ***her auburn hair stood on end****. At the third crow she turned and* ***flew out****.* (p. 174)

> *The door had been opened by a girl, completely naked except for* ***an indecent little lace apron****, a* ***white cap*** *and a* ***pair of little gold slippers****. She* ***had a perfect figure*** *and the only flaw in her looks was a* ***livid scar on her neck****.* (p. 227)

> *The* ***naked witch****, Hella...* (p. 284)

> *The* ***beautiful Hella*** *turned her* ***green eyes*** *on Margarita and smiled.* (p. 288)

Woland describes her in the following way: "this is my maid, Hella. She's **prompt, clever, and there's no service she cannot perform for you**" (p. 288).

It has been noticed that although Hella seems to be quite an insignificant character, Bulgakov dedicates considerable time and space in his novel to describing her appearance and actions.

Above all, it is worth mentioning that Hella differs from the other members of Woland's suite since readers are given no information about her fate after the Satanic ball and the supper. She is not included in the final flight from Moscow. Bulgakov's widow Yelena Bulgakova was once asked about this curious fact, and she guessed that the author probably just forgot about this character. This does not seem impossible because we have to keep in mind that Bulgakov was already very ill when finishing his novel and the final editing was done by his wife. However, some research has also proposed that, since Hella is a so-called lower-class demon, it is quite natural that she should disappear after the ball when she has fulfilled all her tasks (Belobrovtseva & Kuljus 2004: 241).

It is no simple matter to establish the origin of the character and her name because there exist many different theories. In general, we can point out three possible versions[7] of Hella's origin:

1) she is a mixture of female demons Lamia, Empusa, and Mermolika from Ancient Greek mythology;
2) she is derived from Near East Lilith and Akkadian Lilitu;
3) she is inspired by Sumerian *Galla* and Akkadian *Gallû* demons.

Theory of Ancient Greek mythology

Numerous researchers speculate that Hella has Ancient Greek origin. For instance, Lesley Milne claims that the name Hella "was borrowed" by Bulgakov from the Brockhaus-Efron Encyclopaedic dictionary (see BE: Demonologia), where in the chapter about witchcraft it is said that young girls who have become vampires after their death were called by this name on the island of Lesbos (Milne 1977: 50).

Estonian researchers Irina Belobrovtseva and Svetlana Kuljus have presumed that Hella is a character who is a compound of different creatures, more precisely of Empusa, Mermolika, and Lamia. According to Ancient Greek mythology, Empusa was a monstrous spectre which was believed to devour human beings. It could appear in different forms and was sent out by goddess Hecate to frighten travellers. Empusa was believed to usually appear with one leg of brass and the other of an ass. Whenever a traveller addressed the monster with insulting words, it would flee and emit a shrill sound. Mermolikas were demons who ate small children (TGM).

In Greek mythology, Lamia was a Queen of Libya who became a child-murdering monster feared for her malevolence. According to the legend, the goddess Hera slayed all of Lamia's children (except Scylla) in anger due to the fact that Lamia had slept with her husband Zeus. Lamia's subsequent grief at the death of her children caused her to turn into a monster who took revenge on all mothers by stealing their children and devouring them (RE 1924: 544–546). Lamia was a daughter of a mortal man; the goddess Hera killed all of her children, and because of her grief she turned into a monster – a woman with a long tail of a serpent, fingers tipped with wickedly sharp talons, and a mouthful of long, dagger-like teeth (RE 1924: 545). One could, of course, argue that Bulgakov's Hella does not possess any of these characteristics and there is nothing that might suggest she is aggressive towards small children.

Theory of Near East Lilith and Akkadian *Lilītu*

Additionally, Belobrovtseva and Kuljus (2004: 240) are convinced that Hella's origin should also be looked for in Hebraic and Sumerian mythology. In Hebraic culture Lamia is known as Lilith (Hutter 1999b [1995]: 521). Very similar to Lamia is also the Babylonian female demon Lamashtu (Farber 2014; Wiggermann 2011: 310, 316–319; 2000: 217–253).

Laura D. Weeks (1984: 238–239) claims that Hella is a direct reference to the Lilith legend in the Ancient Near East. Sumerian *líl* means 'a gale, emptiness'. In Sumerian mythology *líl*-demons are related to gales and their Akkadian equivalents are *lilû, lilītu* (MUNUS.LÍL.LÁ) and (*w*)*ardat lilî* 'storm demons' (Black & Green & Postgate 2000: 182; Hutter 1999b [1995]: 520–521).

J. Black and A. Green have pointed out:

> *The male* lilû *and the two females* lilītu *and* ardat-lilî *are a sort of family group of demons. They are not gods. The* lilû *haunts desert and open country and is especially dangerous to pregnant women and infants. The* lilītu *seems to be a female equivalent, while the* ardat-lilî *(whose name means 'maiden* lilû*') seems to have the character of a frustrated bride, incapable of normal sexual activity. As such, she compensates by aggressive behaviour especially towards young men. The* ardat-lilî*, who is often mentioned in magical texts, seems to have some affinities with the Jewish Lilith (e.g. Isaiah 34:14). 'She is not a wife, a mother; she has not known happiness, has not undressed in front of her husband, has no milk in her breasts.' She was believed to cause impotence in men and sterility in women.* (Black & Green 2004 [1992]: 118)

Hutter, on the other hand, emphasizes their sexuality. They are mostly female creatures without husbands, who look for men and enter through windows (as does Hella in the novel). They seduce men but cannot give birth. In this sense Lilith is very similar to Lamashtu and they are often considered to be the same creature. The motif of Lilith spread from Mesopotamia to Syria and from there to the West (Hutter 1999b [1995]: 520–521).

In fact, Lilith is already to be found in Ancient Sumer, such as in the poem *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld*. In the first tale Inanna (the Sumerian goddess of love and war) plants a tree in her garden in the hope of one day making a chair and a bed from it. The tree becomes infested, however, by a snake at its roots, a female demon (*lilītu*) in its centre, and an Anzu bird on its branches. No matter what she tries, Inanna cannot rid herself of the pests and so appeals to her brother, sun-god Utu, for help. Utu refuses but her plea is

heard by Gilgamesh who comes, heavily armed, and kills the snake. The demon and the Anzu bird then flee and Gilgamesh, after taking the roots for himself, presents the trunk to Inanna to build her bed and chair from. From those roots Gilgamesh makes the musical instruments *pukku* and *mikkû* (Afanasieva 1979: 85–86). The *lilû* demon who is related to Lilith appears already in the *Sumerian King List* (Espak 2009; Gabriel 2018), written in ca 2000 BC, where he appears as Gilgamesh's father. The Akkadian *Lilītu* belongs to a group of female vampires called succubi. *Lilītu* is described as possessing extraordinary beauty and a thirst for blood (Weeks 1984: 238–239).

Theory of Sumerian *Galla* and Akkadian *Gallû* demons

The Greek version of the name *Lilītu* is *Gello* or *Gellos* (Γέλλως), a demon who harms newborns and their mothers, and the name *Gello* appears repeatedly in Greek texts. For example, Gello is mentioned by the Greek sophist Zenobius (Zenobii Proverbia 1839: 253).

However, the origins of this form are probably not originally from Ancient Greece but from Ancient Mesopotamia, where this name occurs in Sumerian as *galla* (gal_5-la) and in Akkadian as *gallû*, standing for a group of demons from the underworld. Assyriologists J. Black and A. Green state:

> *The* galla *(Akkadian* gallû*) is one of the numerous types of underworld demons especially responsible for hauling unfortunate humans off to the underworld. Often mentioned in incantations in enumerations of seven types of evil demons (see magic and sorcery), the* gallas *in one magical text are said themselves to number seven.* (2004 [1992]: 85–86)

Gallû were constables (Wiggermann 2011: 300) and very powerful demons, who could capture even gods and take them to the netherworld. For example, in the Akkadian myth "Innana's descent to netherworld", the goddess Inanna had to enter the underworld (Inanna decided that she would visit her sister, goddess Ereškigal, one of the rulers of the underworld), give up all her clothes, and could not return to the earth unless she left a replacement in the underworld. It was generally impossible to return from the underworld, even for gods. So, in order to return to the earth, Inanna had to give her husband, the god Dumuzi (Akkadian Tammuz), to the demons of Galla. The Galla demons took Dumuzi at the request of Inanna and led him to the underworld where Dumuzi was forced to spend six months each year. While he is gone it is winter on the earth

and when he returns to the earth, it is spring (Black & Green 2004 [1992]: 85; about Dumuzi see also Rubio 2001).

As Franz Wiggermann has correctly pointed out, sometimes evil people were also characterized as *gallû* (Wiggermann 2011: 300). In Mesopotamian incantations *gallû* were also often portrayed as evil demons of illness (Annus 2017: 191), for example, in the anti-witchcraft incantation series *Maqlû* and others (e.g., Annus 2017: 103, Tablet II line 5; 135, Tablet V, line 63).

The possible Near Eastern origin of Hella is also important from the point of view of translation. In Estonian and English translations, the original name *Гелла* has become *Hella*. This has happened most likely because it is common knowledge that many (especially German, but not only) foreign names and words originally beginning with the letter H are written in Russian with a G, for example, *Hitler – Гитлер, Hamburg – Гамбург, hertz – герц*, etc. So, it is possible that in both Estonian and English translations, the name *Гелла* was treated as a foreign name, and since in Russian it was written with the letter G, it turned into an H in translated texts. However, if we consider the fact that Bulgakov, who knew the Ancient Near East very well, named his character after *Gallû* or *Galla* demons, the vampire should be called Gella in other languages as well. We would like to add here that in some German translations (see, e.g., Bulgakow 1994) the name *Gella* is preserved.

AZAZELLO

Another demonic character in the novel is Azazello (for more see Mason 2010) and he is described as follows:

> *He was **short**, with fiery **red hair** and one **protruding fang,** wearing a starched shirt, a good striped suit, patent-leather shoes and a bowler hat. His tie was bright. One strange feature was his breast pocket: instead of the usual handkerchief or fountain pen, it contained a gnawed chicken bone.* (p. 251)

> *… a small, red-haired man … He had one yellow fang, a **wall eye** and was wearing a black sweater with a knife stuck into a leather belt.* (p. 223)

> *… rode Azazello, his face transformed by the moon. Gone was the idiotic wall eye, gone was his false squint. Both Azazello's **eyes were alike, empty and black, his face white and cold**. Azazello was now in his real guise, **the demon of the waterless desert, the murderer-demon.*** (p. 427)

Compared to some other members of Woland's court, Azazello does not appear in the novel very often, and when he does appear, he mostly just frightens humans into doing what Woland wants; he is strong, violent, and shoots very well. When he has to convince Margarita to attend the Satanic ball, he is forced to admit that dealing with women is difficult for him and that Behemoth would have managed much better.

His name is considered to be undoubtedly derived from the demon Azazel (see, e.g., Dietrich & Loretz 1993). Azazel or Azazil (*'azā'zēl*) appears repeatedly in the Bible (e.g., in the Old Testament, Book of Leviticus 16:10), but its meaning is not completely clear. According to Bernd Janowski's analysis, *'zz'l* may consist of the following components: *'zz* (to be strong) and *'l* (meaning god in Hebrew; *ilu* is the equivalent of this in Akkadian) (Janowski 1999: 128–131).

There are several possible etymologies of the name of Azazel; here we present just a few examples. Azazel could be the geographic name meaning a 'steep place' or a 'rough rock' (Driver 1956: 97–98), as well as a demon's name or demon's epithet. In addition, Azazel has the concept of *'ēz* ('goat') and *'oz ēl* ('to go away, disappear', cf. to Arabic *zl*), meaning 'a goat who goes away' (Janowski 1999: 128). Janowski has rightly pointed out:

> *In order to define a word as the name or epithet of a demon one could refer primarily to the textual evidence: according to Lev 16: 8–10 a he-goat is chosen by lot 'for Azazel' in order to send it into desert (v 10.21) or into a remote region 'for Azazel'. Since* la'ăzāz'zēl *corresponds to lěYHWH (v 8), 'Azazel' could be also understood as a personal name, behind which could be posited something such as a 'supernatural creature' or 'demonic personality'.* (ibid.)

The question is whether a similar name can be found in the Ugarit cuneiform texts in North Syria. The Ugaritologist Oswald Loretz (1985) has argued that there is a noticeable similarity between the Hebrew *'zz'l* and Ugarit *'zb'l*.

In any case, in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, Azazel is called an evil genius, a fallen angel who started a war against God in heaven. According to the legend, he was the one who introduced the art of making weapons and jewellery to people (Belobrovtseva & Kuljus 2004: 192). Bulgakov's Azazello is also aggressive and militant; he fights and kills. In Talmudic literature his name is synonymous with Satan. The desert is considered to be the place for demons, so Bulgakov calls him 'the demon of the waterless desert' and that is correct, as has been pointed out by several investigators. H. Duhm and some other researchers have called Azazel 'Kakodämon der Wüste', who was involved in the sacrifice of goats (Duhm 1904: 56; Janowski 1999: 128).

Possible connections with Egypt have also been suggested:

> *According to this theory an original ritual of elimination has been enriched through the addition of the concept of 'scapegoat'-receiver in the form of a demon, who bears traits of the Egyptian god Seth, the classic 'God of Confusion'.* (Janowski 1999: 129)

Based on the Mesopotamian material, researchers have discovered that Azazel may have origins in Anatolia and northern Syria. In addition to the comparison of Canaan, the Palestinian material, it is also relevant here to study the Hurrian material from Kizzuwatna in northern Syria and southern Anatolia. Here it is important to look at the rituals of the "scapegoat", which "may be the missing link between South Anatolia, North Syria and the traditions of Palestinian rituals" (Janowski 1999: 129).

> *In the case of Azazello, the ties with the Hebraic tradition are of a more substantial nature. A demon of the desert whose origins go back to ancient Near Eastern lore, Azazel appears briefly in the Old Testament (Leviticus 16) and again in the First Book of Enoch, a large part of which is devoted to retelling the story of Noah. It gives the following account of the misdeeds of men and angels that brought on the great flood: God's creation having been successfully established, certain of the Heavenly Watchers, among them the angel Azazel, began to lust after the beautiful daughters of mortal men. Binding themselves with an oath to their proposed venture, they came to earth together with their leader Semjazel, and each of them took to himself a mate. Once on earth, they also began to disseminate their heavenly knowledge in various fields (astrology, metallurgy), knowledge that had previously been forbidden to men. … We have here more than enough, it seems, to identify Azazello with the fallen angel Azazel. Not only is Azazello associated with weapons through his gun with which he kills the Baron and later wins the shooting match, but it is he who gives Margarita the cream with the power to beautify women and bewitch men.* (Weeks 1984: 237–238)

BEHEMOTH

In the novel Behemoth is described as three forms: a cat, a human, and a demon:

> … *a cat the* ***size of a pig***, ***black as soot*** *and with luxuriant cavalry officers' whiskers … the cat trotting along on its hind legs.* (p. 52)

> … ***black cat of revolting proportions*** *… a glass of vodka in one paw and a fork, on which he had just speared a pickled mushroom, in the other.* (p. 90)

> … *a shortish, fat creature with what seemed like* ***the face of a cat.*** (p. 124)

> *The creature who had been the pet of the prince of darkness was revealed as a slim youth, a* ***page-demon***, ***the greatest jester that there has ever been.*** (p. 427)

On the one hand, in North America and Europe cats have been associated with forces of darkness for a very long time and in different cultures cats are considered to be witches' assistants. Cats, especially the black ones, are believed to bring bad luck.

On the other hand, there also exist cultures where cats have been worshipped as positive creatures, such as in Egypt, where the sun-god Ra had a cat who defended him. Ra's daughter Bastet was also a cat goddess.

Thirdly, there are very common beliefs about people who are able to transform into animals and vice versa, such as werewolves and others.

The relationship with the forces of darkness as well as the ability to transform into human form are also characteristics of M. Bulgakov's Behemoth. But what is the possible Oriental origin of this character?

Most likely, Bulgakov was particularly inspired by Mikhail Orlov's *Istoriia snoshenii cheloveka s d'iavolom* (The History of the Relation of Man with the Devil, 1904), where the demon Behemoth (also one of the fallen angels) is mentioned and described as a monster with an elephant head, tusks and trunk, enormous belly, short tail, big hind legs and human hands (Orlov 1991: 158; see also BE). Bulgakov was probably also inspired by the books of Genesis, Job, and Enoch.

Laura D. Weeks associates Behemoth in particular with Judaism (Old Testament), according to which Behemoth was created together with Leviathan on the 5th day and was the greatest land creature of all times (the largest sea monster was Leviathan). Behemoth appears both in Genesis and in the Book

of Enoch (Weeks 1984: 237), and is also mentioned in the Book of Job (40: 15–24). There is no consensus among researchers about this appearance; some are convinced that it refers to the hippopotamus, and others that it could have been an elephant.

Bernard Batto suggests that *Běhēmôt* is an intense (female) plural form of the word *Běhēmâ* (Batto 1999 [1995]: 165), meaning 'beast', 'ox',[8] or 'cattle'. Behemoth's Ancient Near Eastern origins have also been discussed, but there is no solid evidence of that, so we cannot state 100% that it was "borrowed" from the Ancient Near East.

There is also the theory that *Běhēmôt* could be derived from the ancient Egyptian word **p'-iḥ-hw* 'the ox of the water'. Batto (1999 [1995]: 166) has stated that although it is now known that such a term was not found in Egyptian or Coptic, Behemoth is still firmly related to the hippopotamus.[9]

ABADONNA (ABADDON)[10]

Abadonna is one of the most mysterious characters in the novel and he is described in only a few words:

> *He is **utterly impartial and is equally sympathetic** to the people fighting on either side.* (p. 291)

> *… from the wall appeared the figure of **a man wearing dark glasses**.* (p. 292)

Altogether Abadonna appears only three times: once at Woland's apartment when Woland shows Margarita a globe; and twice during the ball scene when he appears, accompanied by a group of unnamed youths, and later helps to kill Baron Maigel.

His name refers to another ancient demon, Abaddon, the demon of abyss and destruction, who appears repeatedly in the Old Testament (Job 26: 6; Job 28:22; Job 31:12; Psalms 88:11; Proverbs 15:11; Proverbs 27:20). In Hebrew his name means "destruction" or "the place of destruction". In Revelation 9:11, however, the word "Abaddon" is used as the name of "the angel of the abyss" (Watchtower Online Library).

Although Abaddon appears in the Bible, there is no evidence that he could have even more ancient origins. Manfred Hutter explains it as follows: "Though the religions of the ancient Near East know a considerable number of deities

and demons relating to the netherworld, there occurs no divine name of such a being which can be derived from the root *'BD*" (Hutter 1999a [1995]: 1).

Nevertheless, it has been established that Abaddon is the Hebrew name for the Greek Apollyon, the angel of the bottomless pit, the "destroyer".

CONCLUSION

In the article we have tried to show the possible Ancient Near Eastern origins for the characters of Mikhail Bulgakov's most famous novel, *The Master and Margarita*. Although there is no concrete evidence proving that Bulgakov read solid scientific literature about Ancient Near Eastern deities and demons published in Russia or abroad, he was most probably familiar with popular scientific papers on these topics as this idea has been suggested by several different scholars. Here we emphasize two important clues. Firstly, his father was an associate professor of theological studies in Kiev and was most probably very familiar with the Bible, Hebrew, the Old Greek and Aramaic languages, and demonology. This could easily have had an impact on the future writer's understandings and interests. Secondly, Bulgakov's very close friend Anna Akhmatova was married to Voldemar (Vladimir) Shileiko, a famous Russian Assyriologist and poet. Although there is no evidence that Bulgakov and Shileiko ever corresponded or met in person, Bulgakov could have been familiar with Shileiko's works directly or through Akhmatova.

While there is no doubt about Azazello and Behemoth's Ancient Near Eastern origins (the only question being whether they are originally biblical demons or have some other Ancient Near Eastern background, e.g., Syrian, Aramaic, Phoenician, Ugaritic, etc.), in Hella's case there are many different theories about her possible prototypes in Roman, Greek, and Ancient Near Eastern mythologies and religions. We have presented some of the strongest hypotheses and tried to trace back to the most ancient sources where Hella or similar demons were mentioned – in Sumerian and Akkadian texts. We cannot be sure that, when writing his novel, Bulgakov had Hella's possible Sumero-Akkadian origin in mind, but as we have shown in our study, it does seem that Bulgakov's novel character is very similar to Mesopotamian *lilītu* and *galla/gallu* demons who were often depicted as succubi or another type of female (but not always) demon connected to the netherworld and the undead (vampires).

All in all, Bulgakov's great interest in and love of the Orient (especially the Ancient Near East) can clearly be seen in his novel, offering the reader a great deal of joy of discovery, as well as the opportunity to do a little detective work to discover the origins of these supernatural characters.

NOTES

[1] We would like to express our gratitude to professor Dr Vladimir V. Emelianov since he first drew our attention to the fact that there could be a connection between M. Bulgakov's Hella (Gella) and Akkadian *Gallu* demons. We were inspired to write this article because of Vladimir Emelianov's Facebook post (ОТКУДА ВЗЯЛАСЬ БУЛГАКОВСКАЯ ГЕЛЛА?) from 6.10.2018, https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=%D0%B3%D0%B5%D0% BB%D0%BB%D0%B0%20&epa=SEARCH_BOX (last visited 11 March 2020). V. V. Emelianov is a professor (Assyriologist) at St. Petersburg State University. He has also researched the reception of Ancient Near Eastern legacy in Russian literature. In addition, we are very thankful to Professor Gebhard J. Selz, Dr Sebastian Fink, Dr Mait Kõiv and anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and remarks about our article that helped us improve it significantly.

[2] About the history of the Estonian translations of this novel see Kupp-Sazonov 2017: 224–225.

[3] This point of view was also presented by Professor V. V. Emelianov in private scientific online discussion with V. Sazonov on 30 April 2020.

[4] In the earlier versions of *The Master and Margarita* she was called Marta (Aramaic name). For more on her possible prototype see *The Master and Margarita*.

[5] Hereinafter our emphases.

[6] Later the reader finds out that because of this kiss Varenukha turned into a vampire. In the miniseries *The Master and Margarita* (2005) Hella is very clearly depicted as a vampire and her "kiss" on Varenukha's neck emphasizes it even more.

[7] For some other suggested theories about Hella's origin see Razumovskaia 2012: 225.

[8] It could be that *Běhēmâ* means a water buffalo.

[9] The Russian word *бегемот* also means 'hippopotamus'. In Russian and Estonian versions Anna Richardovna, Prokhor Petrovich's secretary, described Behemoth as a tomcat, black, a colossus like a hippopotamus. In M. Glenny's translation she says: "A great black animal as big as Behemoth" (p. 211).

[10] Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita* is not the first occasion when Abadonna is mentioned in Russian literature. Vasily Zhukovsky wrote a poem "Abbadona" in 1814. In his interpretation Abaddon was once a seraph but he lost his divine position (Zhukovsky 1814). Furthermore, in 1840 Nikolay Polevoy wrote the novel *Abadonna*.

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Vladimir Sazonov (PhD) is Associate Professor in Ancient Near Eastern Studies at the Centre for Oriental Studies, Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu, Estonia. His main research areas include Mesopotamian royal ideology and religion, imperial concepts, propaganda and Ancient Near Eastern literal legacy.

vladimir.sazonov@ut.ee

Sirje Kupp-Sazonov (PhD) is lecturer in Russian Language and Translation Studies at the Department of Translation and Interpretation Studies at the College of Foreign Languages and Cultures, University of Tartu, Estonia. Her main research areas include the role of grammar in translation, Russian-Estonian translation, Estonian translations of *The Master and Margarita*.

sirje.kupp-sazonov@ut.ee

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RUMOURS IN A SITUATION OF POLITICAL CONFLICT: CATALONIA AND ITS REFERENDUM OF SELF-DETERMINATION

Emili Samper
Department of Catalan Studies
Rovira i Virgili University, Tarragona, Spain
emili.samper@urv.cat

Carme Oriol
Department of Catalan Studies
Rovira i Virgili University, Tarragona, Spain
carme.oriol@urv.cat

Abstract: Catalonia is in a situation of political conflict with the Spanish State regarding its right to self-determination, a conflict that has been exacerbated in recent years by the growing demand from a part of Catalan society for an independent state. Throughout this situation rumours have appeared in relation to events as they unfold. One of the key moments in the conflict was the referendum on self-determination, which was approved, prepared, and held on 1 October 2017, in the face of continuous opposition from the Spanish State. The tensions, uncertainties, and fears experienced by those in favour of the referendum were fuelled by rumours that in many cases were ultimately proven to be false. The present paper will analyse the rumours that emerged in relation to the referendum and the political atmosphere at that time. The study will analyse the rumours relating to aspects such as the logistics required to hold the referendum, the key figures in the process, the organizations that support it and the actions of the media, among others.

Keywords: Catalonia, independence, referendum, rumour, self-determination, Spain, WhatsApp

INTRODUCTION

For years now Catalonia has been in a situation of political conflict with the Spanish State in relation to the right to self-determination. The last time that Catalonia regained its parliament was after Franco's dictatorship, in the first

years of the transition from the dictatorship to democracy, specifically in 1979, with the passing of a new Catalan statute of autonomy that in many respects was more restrictive than the one approved in 1932, during the second Spanish republic.[1] Since 1979, the Catalan people have constantly aspired to greater autonomy. In 2006, after years of difficult negotiations, in a referendum the Catalan people approved a new statute of autonomy, which had been agreed on with the Spanish government. However, in 2010 the constitutional court (which is highly politicized and chiefly made up of conservative judges) revoked some very significant articles of the statute, at which point many Catalans came to the conclusion that they would only achieve effective self-government by becoming independent from Spain. Since 2010, when the first massive demonstrations protesting against the actions of the constitutional court[2] occurred, every 11 September[3] there have been huge demonstrations for independence.

The Catalan Government responded to this social demand for independence by holding a non-binding consultation of the Catalan population on 9 November 2014. The results showed majority support for independence. This led the Catalan Government to convene elections to determine the majority position of the people living in Catalonia. The electoral programmes of the pro-independence parties clearly stated their political will to work to make Catalonia's independence possible. The elections were held on 27 September 2015 and the pro-independence parties achieved absolute majority. With this democratic endorsement, the Catalan Government requested the Spanish Government on repeated occasions to be able to make a referendum; however, in view of the continual refusal to address the issue, the pro-independence parties began the process in the Catalan parliament of planning and holding a referendum. In fact, during the first half of 2017, according to the barometer of the Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (Opinion Studies Centre) of the Catalan Government, 73.3% of people living in Catalonia were in favour of holding a referendum on self-determination, and 50.3% were in favour even if the Spanish government did not agree (Moldes 2017).

This situation of disagreement between the Catalan and Spanish governments provoked a growing conflict. One of the peaks of this conflict was the approval, preparation, and holding of the referendum on self-determination that took place on 1 October 2017. Despite the many attempts by the Catalan Government to arrive at an agreement with the Spanish Government for holding the referendum, this was not possible. Finally, the referendum was organized in the context of continued opposition from the Spanish Government. The tensions, uncertainties, and fears experienced by the people in favour of holding a referendum were fuelled by rumours that in many cases were revealed to be untrue. Tension began to increase from 7 September 2017, when the Catalan

Government signed the order for the referendum for 1 October 2017. The Spanish Government reacted to the initiatives aimed at holding the referendum by sending around 6,000 police officers to Catalonia, modifying Spanish laws to limit the actions of the Catalan Government, increasing the Spanish intelligence service activities, intervening in the Department of Economy of the Catalan Government and trying to prevent all preparations of the Catalan Government (for example, the elaboration of an electoral roll).

In this context, the objective of this paper is to analyse the effect of rumours spread in the days before the referendum on self-determination, which is when the tensions reached one of the highest points in the conflict. If we apply Westerman's (1996) proposal, we can say it is an example of "the folklore of politics" insofar as it was a sample of folklore produced by a specific community as a result of a political conflict.

Specifically, we analyse the rumours discussed in a WhatsApp group formed by 23 people in favour of holding the referendum. The intention is to provide a sample from the period before the referendum of the themes that concerned the population and how they reacted to certain actions taken by those who were against it. Although the number of examples is limited, it can still give an idea of the atmosphere in Catalonia during those days and of how people transmitted their fears by reacting to the rumours that were generated in this period of emotional conflict. In this regard, the article studies a brief period in the history of Catalonia (the days leading up to the referendum on 1 October 2017) as it was experienced by a certain group of people (the participants in the WhatsApp group) with the limitations that this implies.[4] However, it is precisely these limitations that allow us to observe in detail the reactions of a specific social group in the context of the more general political situation of conflict with the Spanish state and the international reverberations that this had. The analysis seeks to contextualize the presence of these rumours among this specific part of Catalan society and the context that led to them being generated.

THE STUDY OF RUMOURS

DiFonzo & Bordia (2007: 273) define a rumour as "unverified and instrumentally relevant information statements in circulation that arise in contexts of ambiguity and that function primarily to help people make sense and manage threat". According to these authors, rumours have the following characteristics: (a) They are information statements. They are not about the views that people share because rumours aim to be informative;[5] (b) They circulate within a certain group. They are not thoughts that are kept private; (c) They are not

verified, which is not to say they are untrue, since a rumour can actually be true or false;[6] (d) Finally, rumours are "instrumentally relevant". They answer questions that are important or meaningful to people. They can also be understood as revealing the "group sensemaking activity" because they serve to help people understand an ambiguous situation. Sunstein (2014: 4), for his part, defines rumours as "claims of fact – about people, groups, events, and institutions – that have not been shown to be true, but that move from one person to another, and hence have credibility not because direct evidence is available to support them, but because other people seem to believe them".

Although in this article we focus specifically on the study of rumours, we have nevertheless benefitted considerably from other studies that have analysed the phenomena of fake news and legends (such as Ellis 2018; Frank 2018; McNeill 2018; Mould 2018a, 2018b). The reason for this is that certain reflections by these authors regarding fake news and legends can also be applied to rumours, as will be seen subsequently.

The psychological aspect of the rumour is a key factor in understanding its appearance in conflictive situations. In their study on rumour psychology, Allport & Postman (1988 [1947]: 23–24) explain how a rumour is started and continues to be spread in a homogeneous social environment, based on the active interests of the individuals involved in spreading it. The powerful influence exercised by these interests demands that the rumour serves as an element of rationalization. That is, it serves to explain, justify, and attribute meaning to the emotional interest that acts there. Sometimes, the link between interest and rumour is so intimate that the rumour is nothing more than the projection of a completely subjective emotional state.

As for the reception of rumours, Buckner (1965: 55–59) takes into account the knowledge the receiver has about the rumour's content, their previous experiences and the information they have about the person spreading the rumour. And, from here, three possible reactions are established: (a) A critical attitude (*critical set*). The individual can recognize incongruities in the rumour, detect their veracity and try to solve these incongruities; (b) A non-critical attitude (*uncritical set*). The person can speculate on the rumour, modify it, and distort its content; (c) A transmitting attitude (*transmission set*). This is characterized by the little interest that the rumour has for the individual.

It is also necessary to consider the importance of the group's characteristics in the process of spreading the rumour. According to Knapp (1944: 34–35), the factors that need to be considered are: (a) The group climate: the more information circulating among the group members, the higher the probability of spreading a rumour; (b) The homogeneity of the group: the greater the homogeneity of feelings and emotions within the group, the more easily the rumours will

be spread (and this is inversely true for their rejection of the rumour); (c) The need for information: the greater the group's need for information, the better the atmosphere will be for creating rumours; (d) The character of the group: in static groups, characterized by their members' monotony, boredom or passivity, rumours are generators of enthusiasm. In this regard, Ellis (2018: 402) points out that these types of stories "circulate among groups of people who know each other well and share common standards of interest and plausibility".[7]

Regarding the credibility of the rumours, we can find parallels with the way rumours behave, in contrast to fake news, following the distinction proposed by Mould (2018b: 414):

> *Fake news describes a story intentionally and knowingly made up. Legend requires credibility and the possibility that the story could be true. Fake news created as false cannot be a legend because there is no doubt about its truth. Only when picked up and shared by others who see the story as credible, even if they doubt its accuracy, can it be considered legend.*

In our case, as we will see subsequently, the credibility of a rumour is one of the factors that needs to be taken into account when analysing this corpus.

RUMOURS IN A WHATSAPP GROUP

WhatsApp groups, due to their communication features, allow people to interact and therefore contribute to effective spreading of rumours. As Astapova affirms (2017: 24): "The Internet in general becomes a significant scene and a meeting ground for questioning the existing system – as the real protests are suppressed and the access to offline public space is limited and regulated." A WhatsApp group provides a good opportunity to study the preoccupations and reactions of the participants because they express themselves freely in a private setting. It is this that makes this channel of communication ideal for the study of rumours during a political conflict.

Below we comment on some of the rumours that appeared in a WhatsApp group with the following characteristics: it is made up of 23 people, men and women between 25 and 67 years old, they communicate in the Catalan language, they have university degrees and are mainly in favour of Catalonia's independence. The initials before each message represent the name and surnames of each group member. They are presented in this manner to protect their privacy and to make it easier to present the information from this group. The authors of the present article are members of the group, which is how they have been

able to access the messages. This is common in this type of folklore studies, as noted by McNeill (2018: 493): "As a folklorist, and especially as a legend scholar, I know that much of the information we pass along is not shared and received in the context of research, but rather in the context of informal interaction with other members of our many folk groups."

We have limited our role in this group to that of observers so as not to interfere with its dynamics and to better reflect the real interactions among the group members. In this regard, we are positioning ourselves in a manner that, according to Mould (2018a: 373), is appropriate for folklorists when they are studying phenomena similar to rumours, such as fake news. Thus, the role of the folklorist enables: "(1) recognition that truth and belief are constantly negotiated in the act of performance, (2) attention to emic genres, (3) attention to shifting contexts, and (4) focus on both *how* people share stories and *why*". Consequently, the authors of the present article have not participated in the WhatsApp group to either confirm or deny the rumours shared, because, as Frank states (2018: 385): "It isn't necessarily the job of the folklorist to defend or promote this material, but to do what we have always done, which is to try to account for the artistry of folklore and to understand how it expresses the ethos of the group that shares it".

The rumours analysed have been drawn from a selection of the conversations held by the group between 7 September and 1 October 2017, which is the time period between the signing of the order for the referendum until it was held. By selecting certain conversations, we are able to reduce the amount of material presented and to show the rumours that generated the largest response and reaction among the WhatsApp group members. Within this timeframe, the first rumour appeared on 12 September 2017 and, from that date onwards, the number of rumours continually increased as the referendum date approached. This period was especially prone to the emergence of rumours. As Allport & Postman affirm (1988 [1947]: 27), the circulation of rumours reaches a frenetic point when the public is waiting for a long-awaited event.

The rumours are presented in chronological order. The brackets indicate the comments that describe the group members' actions that complement the information given.

12/09/2017

> *LK: Look what I've just been sent* [photos of police vans].
> *MC: Yes, MS, state of siege. That's behind my house. I couldn't get in to see what the photos show.*

JZ: Is it the Civil Guard or National Police?
MC: It's the Civil Guard barracks, but you can see the vans are of the Spanish Police. Actually, they say these barracks aren't active... but... there's always movement.
JL: I would say that they're just there to do the weapons permits.
MC: Yes, that.
MP: Om, om and om... Breathe... and keep going until the first of October. Post any "strange" movements in the networks. With a smile, the revolt and our anger contained! Until the 2nd of October.
MP: [Shares a photo of the police].
MC: That's Reus.
MP: They're staying at the Hotel Gaudí. Maybe they came to decide if Gaudí [is] *from Reus or Riudoms.*
MC: Probably. Manoeuvres, you know.

One of the concerns of the days before the referendum was the deployment of Spanish security forces (National Police, Civil Guard, and the army) who had been brought to Catalonia, the first two with the excuse of helping the Catalan Police (the Mossos d'Esquadra)[8] to preserve public order if necessary, and the third for the supposed need to perform military manoeuvres. Through the social networks and messages in WhatsApp groups like this one, people shared the images of Spanish army vehicles on Catalan roads and in different Catalan cities, presented as if they were recent photographs, when in fact they were taken in previous military manoeuvres. In this particular case images of a Civil Guard barracks in Reus, near to where two of the WhatsApp group members (MC and JL) live, are shared. MC confirms the location of the images (because of the proximity to their home), although they say that they cannot verify the authenticity of the photographs. The interventions by MP are very significant. Firstly, they ask for calmness and restraint, and encourage the other group members to keep a peaceful attitude towards this situation (with words that are often used in yoga sessions: "Om, om and om... Breathe...") while encouraging sharing similar images through the social networks; they also use the expression "with a smile, the revolt" part of the chorus of the song "And with a smile, the revolt" by the singer-songwriter Lluís Llach composed in 1982, several years after the end of the Franco dictatorship. Secondly, after having shared another image of the police, they use humour to take away tension from the topic that is being discussed when they say that the security forces are staying at the Hotel Gaudí (correct information) to find out whether the modernist architect who gives his name to the hotel (Antoni Gaudí, 1852–1926) was actually born in Reus or Riudoms, a controversy still alive today among the inhabitants of

these two places, and which is often the object of jokes between the defenders of the two different origins. The use of humour in these types of situations should be borne in mind because "[s]imilar to rumors, jokes provide a vent for frustration and an outlet for emotions" (Astapova 2017: 40).[9]

Finally, MC intervenes ironically and comments that it must be "manoeuvres", in clear reference to the justification given by the Spanish Government to the Catalan authorities to explain the presence of the army in some areas of Catalonia.

17/09/2017

> *JC:* [Shares with the group two messages that have been sent: one about the Catalan Police and the other about the day of the referendum]
> *The Catalan Police, who I have spoken to, hope that when they arrive, they'll find the polling places so full of people that they won't be able to get in or do anything to prevent people from voting. They told me that if that's what happens, they won't use force. If you want, you can share this. Go to vote very early. The important time is from 8 to 10. It is important that participation is high at the start because the no-voters feel questioned. It would be good for people that aren't volunteers to stay "guarding" the polling places. There need to be people in case the police or some fascists come. Keep watch all day. DO NOT print the ballots. They would be invalid. Don't be scared. Calmness and a cool head. Share it.*
> *These two messages were sent to me. I don't know if they're true, but I'm sharing them anyway.*
> *MS:* [Repeats the two previous messages, in the reverse order, which have been sent by a reliable source, XG, dated 16/09; the messages are accompanied by the following information]
> *I have just asked a friend of mine who is high up in the Catalan Police and he says that it is totally true.*
> *The advice is that we share it as much as we can.*
>
> *For the referendum to be a success it is very important to spread this information as much as possible.*

The proliferation of messages in WhatsApp groups, especially the ones with many participants, causes the same messages to be shared repeatedly, even almost immediately. This is an example. JC shares two messages with practical instructions for the day of the referendum, supposedly coming from the Catalan Police. Immediately afterwards, MS shares the same information (received the

previous day) reversing the order of the messages, which shows the changes caused by the circulation of these messages by different means. Regarding the attitude of the sender, while JC shows doubts about the information, MS shares it without going into personal evaluations. On the truth of the shared information, the second source explains that a police agent has verified the information, which gives more credence to the rumour.

20/09/2017

MS: [Shares the following message with the group]
ATTENTION
The demonstration in support of our institutions and in DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY is RIGHT NOW in Rambla Catalunya with Gran Via (Barcelona). Do NOT listen to rumours that say it is at Plaça Sant Jaume. Only follow directions from official sources. SHARE IT!
MC: [Sends an image of a police car]
OT: [Sends three images of police cars on the freeway]
I don't know if they are reliable.
MC: Noooooo.
MA: Don't spread panic!
MC: [Sends a video of police cars on an avenue of a city]
PN: MC, these images are from the SPANISH BIKE TOUR! Let's not mix things.
MC: FF sent them to me. Because I'll believe them... And the photos are of manoeuvres from who knows when. I didn't see the BIKE TOUR, so I didn't recognize them.
PN: Me neither.
FM: You can't believe everything you're sent... Those ones of the cops on the highway are also from the Bike Tour... Be careful!!
PN: They told me here, at the TNC.[10]
MC: Thinking a bit, it doesn't fit at all with what's happened today. Sorry everyone. Well, well. It wasn't just me that did it. Don't tell only me off. I'm sorry.

PN: We're not telling you off, MC.

The Spanish judicial and police strategy to prevent the referendum from being held was determined in a new action on 20 September. The actions of the Civil Guard, with the arrest of senior officials of the Catalan Government and the entrance into several ministries to look for clues about the preparations for

the referendum, motivated an immediate response from the civil population. Thousands of people demonstrated peacefully in different parts of the city of Barcelona, including in front of the Ministry of Economy, to denounce acts of repression and demand that the referendum be held. It is in this context where we must place the message that MS shares with the group. This message is a call to join the demonstration in Barcelona, specifically at the junction of Rambla Catalunya with Gran Via, thus denying rumours that the protesters should go to another part of the city (Plaça de Sant Jaume). The accelerated succession of events on these days, together with the repressive actions of the Spanish State and immediate replication of the civil society, led to episodes like this, in which there was a certain degree of confusion about the place where people needed to go. The emergence of rumours (and contra-rumours) proliferated confirming and denying the actions to be carried out.

Next the group began talking about a topic that had already appeared previously, the presence of the Spanish Police in Catalonia. On this occasion, MC shares a video showing police cars. Immediately afterwards, PN denies that they are current images because they come from a sporting event, the Bike Tour in Spain. MC justifies sharing the video because it comes from a reliable source (FF). This shows that it is important that the sender is a trusted person, since this could determine, in some cases, the re-sharing of the message. This is a basic factor when rumours are shared. As McNeill (2018: 496–497) points out with regard to the way we share information that comes from social media, the credibility of the source and the trust we place in it determine how we share the information received:

> *We may seek out additional depth on some of the information that comes to us via social media, but we rarely look into all of it. And why would we? We have a trusted source (who surely read the whole article start to finish, unlike ourselves) and a plausible and intriguing headline, so we pass it on, we repost it. This is, of course, a common and familiar process of legendry that just happens to play out in the transmission of fake news as well. We get a short blip of information from a trusted person, and then we pass it on with a similar lack of depth. Not as a 'story', but as conversation, as information, as exposition.*

FM intervenes to confirm once again that the shared images are from the sporting event and adds that one needs to be careful before spreading the information one receives. In response to this reaction, MC apologizes for having spread a rumour. PN closes the conversation on the subject with an understanding attitude towards MC.

21/9/2017

FM: [Shares the following message with the group]
Friends and Catalans. People who love Catalonia and therefore want it free and independent (like me).
These days there are many jokes, "memes", denouncing and complaining about the attitude of the Spanish Government to our determination to hold the referendum on 1 October. Well, as far as I'm concerned, I'm going to stop sharing unproductive information.
[...]
The great problem that Rajoy[11] *(and the entire Spanish Government) has is that they KNOW that if we vote and we are many people, this is unstoppable because they have been warned from the outside.*
Arriving to this conclusion they have no choice but to create FEAR so that people will not vote. It is their only salvation, and so they are moving policemen, civil guards, military, machine guns... and, don't get scared, but they will move tanks, and they will do everything they can to frighten us so that on 1 October we stay at home.
They cannot stop us from voting with violence (because, in order to use violence, there must be someone in front of them who responds to the violence. And we will not do this). The only way they can win is by dissuading us so that we make the project fail by not going to vote. That is why I want to explain what I will do on 1 October:
I will get up very early, very early (as Guardiola said),[12] *I'll make some sandwiches, I'll get a bottle of water and a backpack, and I will go to the polling place calmly and serenely. Willing to vote or spend the day. As if it were another 11 September.*
If I can vote, fantastic. If not, I propose staying peacefully in our respective polling places so there are more and more people in a festive and peaceful atmosphere (as we have done in recent years for our national day) until there are thousands of people for the photos that will travel around the world. We must win this fight for freedom and our rights. And the best way is with wisdom and serenity. With calmness and good work.
Over the next few days the pressure of the government will increase, but we must be able to reach the 1st of October and go to vote, EVERYONE. Whatever happens, on the 1st of October EVERYONE SHOULD GO.
Then we'll have it in the bag. If you agree, I would be grateful if you shared this written text to ensure maximum attendance at the polls. I personally will share it every day until the 1st of October. The moment of truth is here and we can't get distracted.

There are only 11 days left. FOR CATALONIA AND CATALANS.

MC: Friends, I received this. I don't know if it is police or something to discourage the good people. I hesitated to pass it on because I don't want to collaborate in discouragement. Now, I think it is important to be informed. This has to stir us to fight even more.
[Voice message in Spanish]*: Yes, completely true. Eh... The thing about the ships is true. There are two ships in the port of Barcelona and one in the port of Tarragona. I'm telling you. Giant Cruise Ships. And the entire UIP*[13] *and part of the UPR*[14] *are staying on them and they'll probably put the Civil Guard on them too. Eh... Yes, there are GRS*[15] *and GAR*[16] *who are staying there. OK? I'm in Calella. That always … And there are 200 thousand GRS. But it's true that the ones that come now don't have anywhere to stay. And apart from having nowhere to stay they go to the villages and the villages don't want problems. Look what's happening in Reus. So the Commissariat General of Citizen Security (this comes from the minister, so it also affects the Civil Guard) has decided to grab three huge ships and they can all stay on them. They'll set up security in the port and work regularly. I still don't know if they'll move me to the ship or if I'll stay at the hotel, but, yes, yes, almost all the rumours that you are hearing are true. And there are enough police here to raze Beirut. They need to let us act because, for now, today, the demonstrations are quiet, quiet, and they go past and insult you and they go past and say whatever they want, until we get really pissed off, of course, and we hit who we need to hit.*
MA: That's going around Twitter, but nobody knows where it came from. There's no reliable source. Maybe it's been set up or not. But when they don't say who said it, its suspicious.
JC: I hadn't heard it before. They could have spread it to scare people so they don't go to vote. But we know that they are capable of reacting like that... we'll see.
FM: Is this just one more crazy thing? I mean the recording.

MC: I prefer to follow the one about the person who explains what they'll do on 1 October. It seems much more believable.

This message brings together two contrasting rumours with clearly opposing intentions. First, FM shares a text that evaluates the current situation, comparing the referendum on 1 October 2017 with the non-binding consultation organized by the Catalan Government and held on 9 November 2014. This rumour shows confidence that the referendum will be held "because they have been warned from the outside", in clear reference to another rumour circulating at that time, according to which the highest international authorities would

accept the result of the referendum. These recurring issues were supported by, as happens with fake news, the existence of generic news about the statements of some leaders of other countries in relation to the referendum. In this message another recurring theme also appears: how to act on 1 October. In this case, the message does not only give encouragement to vote, but also practical and attitudinal tips (bring a sandwich and a bottle of water when you go to vote) as if it were a day for celebration and protest, like the national day of Catalonia (11th of September). It has the clear intention of encouraging supporters of Catalan independence not only to go to vote but to also go well prepared to stay the day at the polling places to be able to vote.

The second part is a transcript of an audio recording. Of uncertain origin, this message is in Spanish and is presumably a police officer who confirms the arrival of the state security forces in Catalonia and explains the orders they have been given. It is, in this case, a message released by opponents of the referendum and clearly intends to demoralize and frighten the possible voters so that they will not go out to vote on 1 October. MA confirms that the audio message is also circulating in other social networks and expresses doubts about its authenticity, since its origin is not given. MC's reaction, who shared the audio message, is positive in the sense that MC says that "it is important to be informed", adopt a critical position and not be intimidated. JC thinks that the intention of this message could be, in effect, to discourage people from voting. MC intervenes again to say that they prefer to follow the indications of the previous message that FM shared, which encourages voting, not only because of what it says, but also because the message seems much more credible.

22/09/2017

> *LK:* [Shares the following message with the group]
> *From a very reliable source of the Catalan Government. The prediction is that during the weekend they will lower the pressure level but the strong blow will come on Monday or Tuesday: the arrest of councillors and the president of the government and intervention in all the Catalan media: TV3 and Catalunya Ràdio. We all need to be ready to go out onto the streets and completely stop the country.*
> *The Spanish Government's plan to stop the referendum is circulating in Facebook. First, disable the entire Catalan Government. Second, make the delegate of the Spanish Government Enric Millo acting president. Third, dissolve the parliament and convene autonomous elections in November or*

December. WE CAN'T LET THIS HAPPEN, BECAUSE IT IS A COUP! Share it with your contacts. It is IMPORTANT.
MA: Don't share that! Nobody has the power to dissolve the Parliament and less to nominate Millo. Only the elected president can call elections. ENOUGH, PLEASE!!
Don't spread catastrophic rumours – for your own health and for everyone's wellbeing. Be positive and brave.
MC: You're right, MA. Let's keep going! We all know where we have to be and what we need to do.
MS: Would you stop spreading panic? It's like we've been infiltrated. Please, remember the recommendation not to spread rumours.
SV: Let's lower the tension...
MS: [Sends the group the following message sent to them by a friend]
Hello, trolls are circulating to discourage people. If you receive a message that is not well endorsed and identified, it is advisable not to spread it.
MC: OK! The only thing the State can do is demobilize the vote through fear. We can't fall into the trap.

FM: [Shares the following message with the group]
IMPORTANT WARNING
We only share messages that come DIRECTLY FROM OFFICIAL SOURCES such as this channel (or those of the ANC,[17] *parties, the government).*
The rest are FALSE rumours that THE STATE GENERATES to deceive and frighten. Let's not be fooled, let's not spread them!
To avoid confusion, I'm sending the channel's link to everyone so they can join it!
http://cridademocracia.cat/ws/WS
LET'S STAY CONNECTED!
SHARE IT!
MP: One of the historical forms of repression is to spread false rumours without any evidence in a language that spreads a sensation of anxiety and fear. Try to share only information that you have experienced, that you have contrasted or that is accompanied by documentation that guarantees it.
SV: Good recommendation, MP.
JC: Spanish Unionists threaten with a video of a train full of tanks and it turns out that it is a lie (www.vilaweb.cat).
I totally agree with all that about rumours. This is a clear example.

MC: Someone sent me a video of a train full of tanks a few days ago. I am sad that such a terrible lie should be spread around. I didn't share it, of course.
LK: The same thing happened to me.
JC: Yes, me too.

This message shows the uncertainty about whether the referendum will be held due to the actions of the Spanish Government. On this occasion, unlike the previous occasions, the subject of the security forces intervening to prevent the referendum is not talked about but rather the direct action of the Spanish Government is discussed. According to this rumour, shared by LK, to stop the referendum, the Spanish Government would dissolve the Parliament, proclaim Enric Millo (delegate of the Spanish Government in Catalonia) the president of the Catalan Government and intervene in the public media (Televisió de Catalunya TV3 and Catalunya Ràdio). The message causes some group members to instantly react and highlight the unbelievable nature of the rumour, since only the president of Catalonia can call elections and a president of the Catalan Government cannot be appointed on an interim basis. But even more interesting is the rejection of the rumour by MA and, especially, MS. MA strongly rejects spreading "catastrophic" rumours and MS asks all the group members to remember the recommendations of "not spreading rumours". MS, with the intention of insisting on the convenience of not spreading rumours, shares a message received from a friend who recommends not sharing the messages that clearly have catastrophic and alarmist intentions.

The second message, shared by FM, requests people to only spread the information that comes from reliable sources to avoid the proliferation of rumours that create alarm. In this sense, MP again gives their opinion on the subject and states the fact that precisely this is a strategy commonly used in these types of situations in order to spread "a sensation of anxiety and fear".

23/09/2017

FM: [Shares the news "The State takes control of the Catalan Police before 1-O" published in *El Periódico* on the same day[18]]
Now we don't have our police force.
MC: [Shares the following text signed by the Call for Democracy group]
Attention
In the face of the new and constant ATTACKS FROM THE STATE, our response will always be CALM, ORGANIZED AND PACIFIC.

> *That is why we reinforce the CALL to FILL this Sunday (11am) the squares of Catalonia to participate in the MARATHON FOR DEMOCRACY and we deny that there is any other demonstration organized.*
> ** WE DO NOT BELIEVE RUMOURS, THEY ARE PART OF THE STATE'S DIRTY WAR. SHARE ONLY OFFICIAL SOURCES (Crida,*[19] *ANC,*[20] Òmnium,[21] *parties*[22]*).*
> *We respond to the State with an UNSTOPPABLE WAVE OF DEMOCRACY!*
> *SHARE IT!*
> *-Call for Democracy-*

FM shares the news item "The State takes control of the Catalan Police before 1-O", according to which the Catalan Police became coordinated, along with the Civil Guard and the National Police, by the Civil Guard Colonel Diego Pérez de los Cobos to prevent the referendum from being held. FM's comment that accompanies the news item is significant because, with this measure (which did not become effective), the Catalan Government's security forces would be directed by the Spanish Government. This news reflects one of the concerns of referendum supporters: that the Catalan security forces would have to act against them because they would be ordered to reinforce the opposition already established by the Spanish Government with the National Police, the Civil Guard, and even the army.

In opposition to this news item, MC shares a message signed by the "Call for Democracy" group that encouraged participation in the so-called "Marathon for Democracy"[23] while reinforcing the idea that only the instructions received from official sources should be followed to avoid the "dirty war" being played by Spain in its attempt to prevent the referendum from being held.

24/09/2017

> *MS:* [Shares the link to the news item "A victory, yesterday, we have to understand well" published the day before (09/28/2018) in the electronic newspaper *Vilaweb*[24]]
> *Very important. Read it. Don't spread rumours, we'll lose democracy that way.*

In relation to the spread of rumours, MS shares the editorial by the journalist Vicent Partal, "A victory, yesterday, we have to understand well". It is about one of the most repeated slogans of the Catalan institutions and, especially,

the pro-independence entities (Assemblea Nacional Catalana and Òmnium Cultural) and civil society. Whatever the Spanish Government does to stop the referendum, the reaction of the referendum supporters must be peaceful. On the one hand, to show the legitimacy of the demand (exercise the right to vote to determine the position of Catalan society on the right to self-determination) and, on the other, to not give the Spanish Government reasons for exercising violent repression.

29/09/2017

MC: Question: If you go there with the ballot paper, what envelope do you have to put it in? I suppose there is an official size and shape. And if there aren't any at the polling place? I'm worried. I'm sure you need an envelope to place your vote. Does anyone know?
OT: Do not bring ballots printed at home. The Assembly[25] *assures us that there will be enough at the polling places!*
MP: Ballots and envelopes at the polling places. For now, that's how it is.
MA: On the Assembly's Telegram they give a link. It says that if you bring them from home, they won't be valid.
MC: Today they just sent this:
Every day there are rumours and messages sent in the name of the ANC. Don't believe any that do not come from the ANC's official channels: our Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or this channel of Telegram.
They ask everybody to go on 1 October to vote with ballot papers and show them, so that it is clear that we are going to vote. If we have to cue, it's with the ballot papers in our hands!
They'll be valid!
You can download it from this link: http://bit.ly/papereta.
However, there will be ballots and envelopes in the polling places. Don't worry.
Let's go! And today we'll fill Montjuïc!
Catalan National Assembly
MC: They deny the following message as a false message attributed to them.
[Logo of the Catalan National Assembly]
A few days ago, the idea of carrying voting ballots from home in case there are none at the polling place has spread among the population, DO NOT DO THIS. If the ballot paper is not exactly the same as the official ballot paper, it will be counted as an INVALID vote. Please be assured

> *that there will be ballots, envelopes, ballot boxes and everything that is necessary at the polling places.*
> *Spread this notice to all your family and friends.*
> *JZ: You are collapsing me with so much information. Right now I don't know what I have to do. Take a ballot paper? Don't take one?*
> *MA: There'll be ballot papers at the polling places. If you can't get in, if they have been stolen and someone gives you one that is homologated, it will also be valid. There is a solution for every problem.*

This last message, shared in the group two days before the referendum was held contains diverse (and contradictory) information about one of the issues that worried people most in the days before the referendum: having ballot papers and ballot boxes for voting. This concern was shared by the referendum supporters and those against it: the former to ensure that they could exercise their right to vote in all the polling places, and the latter (including the Spanish Government) for the opposite reason, that is, to prevent the referendum from being held. In fact, the Spanish Government put considerable effort into searching for the ballot papers and ballot boxes precisely with the intention of destroying them and thus making it impossible to vote.

MC expresses their doubts in relation to ballot papers (and envelopes) and how to act if there are not any at the polling places. OT and MP respond that it is not necessary to bring the ballot papers from home because there will be some at each polling place. MC expresses their doubt by sharing two messages, both allegedly sent by the Assemblea Nacional Catalana (Catalan National Assembly). The first message provides a link from which you can download the ballot paper, although it is stated that there will be papers at the polling places. The second message, supposedly false and denied (apparently) by the same entity, requests people not to bring ballot papers printed at home because they will not be valid, which would undermine the favourable option for independence in the vote count. At this point JZ intervenes and says that, in the wake of all this information on ballot papers, they do not know what to do. MA replies that there will be ballot papers at the polling places and that it will not be necessary to bring them printed from home. This is a good example of the consequences of spreading contradictory rumours within the same group and in a short space of time. MC's intention is to clarify the doubts generated by the messages received about the ballot papers, but by sharing the information they have received, the opposite effect is achieved, which is seen in JZ's reaction. Finally, MA says that there will be ballot papers in the polling places, but if there are none, those brought from home will be valid. With MA's closing statement, "There is a solution for every problem", we see one of the key

characteristics of the referendum, the capacity of the Catalan Government and the people who favoured the referendum to provide solutions for making their long-wished-for objective possible: to be able to vote.[26]

As seen in the transcribed messages commented on here, in the analysed WhatsApp group we can observe a great deal of activity regarding the spread of rumours about the referendum for self-determination on 1 October. Of the 23 people who make up the group, 12 participated actively, either by spreading or denying rumours, thus characterizing the group climate (Knapp 1944: 34). In this sense, we can see that participation is more active and energetic when it comes to refuting some of the shared rumours, which can be seen, for example, on 20, 22, and 29 September 2017. As Knapp (1944: 35) has pointed out, the need for information at certain times (a clear example is 29 September with the doubts about the ballot papers) intensifies the circulation of rumours. This spreading of rumours is favoured by the homogeneous nature of the group, made up mostly of people in favour of independence and receptive to receiving any kind of information that, on the one hand, ensures that the referendum can be conducted, and on the other hand, warns of the possible actions carried out by the Spanish Government to stop it from being held. It is in this second case that the rumours generate a more enthusiastic reaction from the most active members of the group, directed mainly at denying the received information and counteracting it with advice that helps to correctly manage personal emotions.

Some group members have a critical attitude (Buckner 1965: 55–57) as they are active in giving evidence of the incongruities in the rumours that generate most concern and alarm, and at the same time ask the rest of the group members to take on a critical attitude faced with the avalanche of information received in those days.

Some of the group members, like JC, do this by accompanying the shared information with comments that show their critical attitude (for example, in messages on 17 and 22 September 2017). MS is the clearest example of this critical attitude, both in the comments about the information sent by other members, and also in their active role in sharing information that can help control rumours, as is clearly seen in the message on 24 September. In terms of the interest generated by the rumours, it can be seen that FM is the most active member of the group in sharing messages, which are usually not accompanied by any kind of personal assessment.

CONCLUSIONS

The rumours studied in this work reveal the issues that were perceived as most relevant to the success or failure of the referendum for self-determination. The referendum was organized and convened by the Catalan Government and not agreed on with the Spanish Government, and in fact with the latter's constant opposition. This led to many uncertainties among the population about whether the referendum could finally be held or not. In the case of people in favour of holding the referendum, studying the communications in the analysed WhatsApp group provides some data on what the most visible concerns of the participants were. Specifically, between 12 and 29 September, these people provided news, rumours, and comments in which it can be seen how, as the date of the referendum approached, the need for reliable information grew along with the desire to be able to vote. Among the topics most discussed in the group are those of fear about police intervention, the concern about the ballot papers and ballot boxes on the day of the referendum, the will to always act peacefully, the confidence in the information provided by the Catalan Government and the pro-independence entities, and the confidence in the selfless help and collaboration among people to achieve a common goal.

The studied WhatsApp group shared their doubts and fears, but they also showed their will to fight the rumours that were harmful as well as share resources for managing emotions. This desire to control the effect of rumours, which is observed in this WhatsApp group and which was also evident in other groups, was very important in the physical and, above all, mental preparation of the people who favoured the referendum. It was, in fact, one of the keys that made it possible to face the day of 1 October with strength and ensure its success. Some media helped identify the rumours that could have had a toxic effect on the population in favour of the referendum and alerted the public to their falseness in editorial comments or news. These were shared in social networks and messaging services like WhatsApp, which contributed to spreading these alerts and thus limited the negative impact of the rumours.

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NOTES

[1] The Parliament of Catalonia has its origins in the Catalan Courts established in 1283.

[2] The demonstration took place in Barcelona on 10 July 2010 under the slogan "We are a nation. We decide".

[3] This is the national day of Catalonia that is commemorated annually, remembering the last defence of the city of Barcelona on 11 September 1714 in the War of the Spanish Succession. With the fall of the city, the institutions, constitutions and civil liberties of Catalonia were also abolished.

[4] For a good introduction to "election folklore", see the article by Astapova (2017).

[5] For Allport & Postman (1988 [1947]: 167) the social problem of the rumour originates precisely because of the unique fact that the listener receives it as the expression of a fact and not based on the intentions of the person telling it.

[6] Neubauer (2013 [2009]: 16–17) expresses himself similarly, in that the falsity or certainty of a rumour is not as important as the fact that it is current and does not have an identifiable emitter, since what everyone says is not a rumour yet, but what is said that everyone says, is a rumour. Nobody knows who is talking through a rumour.

[7] Ellis bases this assertion on the contributions of Dégh & Vázsonyi (1973).

[8] The Mossos d'Esquadra are the police of the Catalan Government, created at the beginning of the 18th century. Reformed in 1983, they have functions including public safety, administrative police, judicial police, intervention, and police of proximity, which are competences of the Catalan Government.

[9] Astapova bases this assertion on the contributions of Banc & Dundes (1986: 10) and Dundes (1971: 51).

[10] Teatre Nacional de Catalunya (National Theatre of Catalonia).

[11] Mariano Rajoy, prime minister of the Spanish Government (2011–2018).

[12] The football trainer (and ex-player) Pep Guardiola, who has shown himself to be in favour of Catalan independence on several occasions, in the speech he gave when he received the gold medal from the Parliament of Catalonia (8 September 2011) said: "If we get up very early, very early, and there are no complaints, there are no excuses, and we get to work, we are an unstoppable country".

[13] Unidades de Intervención Policial (Police Intervention Units).

[14] Unidad de Prevención y Reacción (Unit of Prevention and Reaction).

[15] Grupos de Reserva y Seguridad (Reserve and Security Groups).

[16] Grupo de Acción Rápida (Rapid Action Group).

[17] Assemblea Nacional Catalana (Catalan National Assembly) is a civil society organization strictly independent of political parties and the administration, founded in 2012. It is defined as of the people, united, inclusive, and democratic, and aims to achieve the independence of Catalonia through the constitution of a state of law that is democratic and social (see https://assemblea.cat/, last accessed on 7 September 2021).

[18] Available at https://www.elperiodico.com/es/politica/20170923/el-estado-toma-el-control-de-los-mossos-ante-el-1-o-6305892, last accessed on 7 September 2021. The news was updated on 29 September 2017 and the headline changed to "The Government refuses to submit the Catalan Police to the control of the State".

[19] Crida per la Democràcia (Call for Democracy).

[20] Assemblea Nacional Catalana (Catalan National Assembly).

[21] Òmnium Cultural is a non-profit organization founded in 1961, which works for the promotion of the Catalan language and culture, education, social cohesion, and the defence of the national rights of Catalonia (see https://www.omnium.cat/, last accessed on 7 September 2021).

[22] Pro-independence parties.

[23] The "Crida per la Democràcia" (Call for Democracy) was a campaign promoted by Òmnium Cultural with the aim of defending the referendum on independence. The campaign was embodied, among other actions, in the "Marathon of Democracy" that took shape in over 300 acts in front of town halls or hub centres of different cities and towns of Catalonia.

[24] Available at https://www.vilaweb.cat/noticies/una-victoria-ahir-que-hem-dentendre-be/, last accessed on 7 September 2021.

[25] Assemblea Nacional Catalana (Catalan National Assembly).

[26] This creative ability to deal with difficulties was evidenced on the day of the referendum with "the single census of voters", which allowed people to vote in any of the polling places that existed. Thus, many people who saw the police taking the ballot boxes from their polling place could go to another one to vote and therefore did not lose the possibility to vote.

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Emili Samper is Research Fellow (PhD) at the Catalan Studies Department at Rovira i Virgili University, Tarragona, Spain. His main research fields are folk literature from its origins until now, Catalan literature, and academic studies on comics. He has published articles on folklore history, contemporary legends, and comics, and has co-edited studies with Carme Oriol (*A History of Catalan Folk Literature*, 2019) and Magí Sunyer (*The Myths of the Republic*, 2016). He is also member of the editorial board of the journal *Studies in Oral Folk Literature*.

emili.samper@urv.cat

Carme Oriol is Full University Professor of Catalan Philology and Folk Literature and director of the Arxiu de Folklore at the Rovira i Virgili University, Tarragona, Spain. She has conducted fieldwork in Andorra and Catalonia. Her research interests include folk narrative and the history of folklore. She is

co-author of the books *Index of Catalan Folktales* (Oriol and Pujol, 2008) and *A History of Catalan Folk Literature* (Oriol and Samper, eds., 2019) and director of the journal *Studies in Oral Folk Literature*.

carme.oriol@urv.cat

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THE IMAGE OF THE GERMAN, THE POLE, THE LATVIAN, AND THE LITHUANIAN IN LITHUANIAN AND LATVIAN FOLKLORE

Laima Anglickienė
Associate Professor of Cultural Studies
Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania
laimute.anglickiene@vdu.lt

Antra Kļavinska
Senior Research Fellow
Research Institute for Regional Studies
Rezekne Academy of Technologies, Latvia
antra.klavinska@rta.lv

Abstract: In multi-ethnic societies, one way in which ethnicity manifests itself is in classifying people according to their ethnic origin. Such classification is based on stereotyping and is typically achieved by emphasizing certain common characteristics rather than individual particularities. Both lived experience and folklore corroborate the fact that ethnic stereotypes, ethnic self-awareness, and identity are also influenced by historical circumstances. This article focuses on Lithuanians' and Latvians' attitudes towards Poles and Germans, and towards one another during the period between the eighteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. The aim of this article is to reveal how the folklore of the two neighbouring nations, Lithuanians and Latvians, depicts the aforementioned ethnic groups; what historical events, cultural and social factors determined the similarities and differences in their portrayal in Lithuanian and Latvian folklore.

Keywords: folklore, folk songs, Germans, Latvians, Lithuanians, paroemias, Poles

APPROACHES, METHODS, AND MEASURES

Neighbouring nations are usually characterized by numerous cultural similarities, but also differences in their lifestyle, customs, behaviour, and appearance. They do not go unnoticed and often give impulse to the creation of ethnic stereotypes. Lithuania and Latvia are two neighbouring countries with the same

ethnic minority groups living in their territories. Because of the shared historical circumstances, the two nations also share quite similar attitudes towards one or another ethnic group. This article discusses the attitudes Lithuanians and Latvians have towards Poles, Germans, and towards each other. The aim of this article is to discuss how Lithuanian and Latvian folklore portrays the same ethnic groups and what historical events as well as cultural and social factors determined the similarities and/or differences in their portrayal.

Folklore can be seen as a way of communicating experiences as it helps see which events, social phenomena and relations as well as character features are regarded as significant in the collective consciousness of one or another nation. Folklore also makes use of and often reinforces stereotypes about other nations. As noted by Thomas Hylland Eriksen:

> *Stereotypes are simplistic descriptions of cultural traits in other groups which are conventionally believed to exist. … Ethnic stereotypes are often morally condemning …, and such images of others may strengthen group cohesion, boundaries and one's self-perception. In polyethnic societies, people also commonly hold stereotypes about themselves; … tend to describe themselves collectively as honest, generous folk in implicit contrast to other ethnic groups. It is impossible to make a general statement about the relationship of stereotypes to 'facts'. They can be exaggerated, overly generalising and ideologically charged descriptions of social facts.* (Eriksen 2001: 264)

The material for this research was collected at the main Lithuanian and Latvian folklore archives (LTR, LFK), which have been collecting items of folklore since the beginning of the twentieth century; from electronic databases of genre-specific texts and major song collections; and from the folklore collections published in Lithuanian and Latvian during the twentieth century. The number of Lithuanian and Latvian folklore texts which mention people of other ethnic groups is very high; therefore, the scope of the present research had to be limited and includes only songs, paroemias (proverbs and sayings), and humorous tales, most of which had been recorded before the middle of the twentieth century and thus reflect the situation during the period between the eighteenth and the middle of the twentieth centuries. These folk genres feature characters of other ethnicities more frequently than others. Folk songs differ from other genres of folklore when it comes to ethnonyms of ancient origin and specific stylistic features; diversity and polychronism in the usage of ethnonymic lexicon. Historical and war songs, wedding songs, and humorous songs mention people of other ethnicities with particular frequency. Paroemias, often through

their comparative structures, use ethnonyms not only to describe foreigners, but also to emphasize their otherness, singling out certain strange and, therefore, negative features of these people that usually live close by. Humorous folktales talk about people's everyday troubles and joys and bring the listener closer to the real-life conditions of the period during which they were created. These folktales are often similar to anecdotes, short witty stories about some misunderstanding or how someone has made fun of themselves. Assuming the point of view of a humble Lithuanian or Latvian peasant, the two narrative genres most often ridicule foreigners as representatives of higher social layers, including the nobility, who also often belong to different religious confessions. However, the present article does not analyse more recent anecdotes, which have become particularly popular lately, for example, those portraying the relationship between Poles and Germans in the twenty-first century (Anglickienė 2011).

The most important studies focusing on the image of foreigners in Lithuanian and Latvian folklore are Latvian folklorist Jānis Rozenbergs's collection of essays titled *Tautas un zemes latviešu tautasdziesmās* (People and Lands in Latvian Folk Songs) (2005) and Lithuanian ethnologist Laima Anglickienė's monograph titled *Kitataučių įvaizdis lietuvių folklore* (The Image of Foreigners in Lithuanian Folklore) (2006). The novelty of this article is an analysis of ethnonyms in folklore texts, conducted by using semantic structure models as proposed by cognitive and anthropological linguistics, which emphasize the historical context and comparative aspects in the construction of the image of foreigners.

Semantic structure

The model of the semantic structure of ethnonyms used in this article is grounded upon models of semantic structure developed in cognitive linguistics and anthropological linguistics, which have much in common. For example, both in cognitive linguistics (Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007) and in contemporary Slavic ethno-linguistics (Bartmiński & Zinken 2009; Berezovich & Gulik 2002; Tolstaia 2006), one of the central terms is *concept*. The school of Russian cognitive semantics identifies the following structure of the concept: 1) the image (perceptive, i.e., traits perceptible with senses and cognitive traits; metaphorical understanding of objects or phenomena); 2) informative content – the minimum of cognitive traits determining the nature of the concept, i.e., definition of the concept's keyword; 3) interpretive field (evaluative, utilitarian, socio-cultural, paremiological area) (Popova & Sternin 2007: 104–115). These structural principles are used in this article to elaborate on the model of ethnonym semantics.

Russian ethno-linguists propose a method of describing the connotational semantics of ethnonyms, called *onomasiological portrait* (Berezovich & Gulik 2002). Berezovich and Gulik examine the contrastive aspect, which is important in cognitive and anthropological linguistics, and also offer the following criteria to structure a comparative analysis: 1) 'objective' descriptors, i.e., the idea of the emergence of an ethnic group (folk etymology), language characteristics, place of residence, biological characteristics (appearance, physical capacities, sexual sphere, etc.), mentality (character traits, intelligence, habits, religiousness), and social characteristics (economic sphere, relations with others, impact on other cultures); 2) 'subjective' descriptors, i.e., emotional evaluative characteristics (mostly negative, in the sense of 'incomprehensible', 'wrong', 'false') (Berezovich & Gulik 2002: 59). This theoretical approach was further developed and elaborated upon in the doctoral thesis by Antra Kļavinska, *Etnonīmi latgaliešu folklorā: lingvistiskais aspekts* (Ethnonyms in Latgalian Folklore: Linguistic Aspect), where she analysed ethnonymic lexicon in Latgalian (the Latvians of Latgale region) folklore and addressed the problems and opportunities related to the lexical identification of ethnonyms, as well as to their typological and semantic determination (Kļavinska 2015b).

This article builds the image of foreigners using the following structure:

1) **nominative field** – ethnonyms used for the designation of ethnos;

2) **interpretive field** (evaluating attitude), within which we can distinguish:

– **religious field**: religious / confessional affiliation;

– **cultural field**: customs and traditions;

– **social field**: occupation, place of living;

– **linguistic field**: language, communication abilities, and need;

– **perceptive field**: physical appearance, paralinguistic traits;

– **the field of emotional and intellectual evaluation**.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND ETHNIC SITUATION IN LITHUANIA AND LATVIA

First of all, the historical circumstances in Lithuania and Latvia that influenced the representation of different ethnic groups both in real life and in folklore should be described. Poles and Germans have lived both in Lithuania and Latvia for a very long time; moreover, until the end of the nineteenth century, when the Lithuanian and Latvian national revival movements were established, both Poles and Germans occupied higher positions than local Lithuanians and Latvians in the social hierarchy of both countries.

Historical situation and ethnocultural diversity in Lithuania

In the thirteenth century, Lithuania began to unite neighbouring lands, and, in the fourteenth century, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania became the largest country in Europe. With the Lublin Union of 1569, Lithuania and Poland formed a two-state union, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the Union, the larger and stronger Poland occupied a superior position and, eventually, Polonization affected all aspects of life in Lithuania: politics, language, culture, and national identity. As a result, in the nineteenth century, the Lithuanian nobility already spoke Polish; Polish culture became dominant and was considered prestigious, which, consequently, could guarantee a higher social status, whereas the Lithuanian language and culture were considered to be inferior and were associated almost exclusively with peasants' way of living. During that period, the words *Pole* and *Polish* defined not only nationality or religion[1] but also people of higher status, the nobility. This started changing only at the end of the nineteenth century, when the Lithuanian National Revival began, and the Lithuanian language and culture became important for the formation of Lithuanian ethnicity, leading to the creation of an independent state in the year 1918.

The **Polish** minority in Lithuania was formed from different waves of migration. Most Poles lived and continue living in the southeast of Lithuania (Vilnius region). In the past centuries, a significant number of Poles living in Lithuania were noblemen with high social status; around a half were peasants, while the rest lived in towns and earned their living by trade and handicraft. It is also noteworthy that this ethnic group constituted the highest percentage of the nobility in Lithuania (Anglickienė 2006: 48).

A major conflict with Poland arose in the interwar period, when the capital of Lithuania, Vilnius, and the entire Vilnius region were occupied by Poland, whereby Lithuania lost that part of its territory. Poles became principal enemies of Lithuanians; even today, when any problem with local Poles (who are the largest ethnic minority group in contemporary Lithuania, see Table 1) or Poland occurs, Lithuanians recall the loss of Vilnius and do not spare negative epithets to them.

Germany and Lithuania have many-sided ties. The German state (Prussia) was Lithuania's neighbour until World War II. Many Lithuanians lived in German territories, in the historical-ethnographic region of Prussia and, later, Eastern Prussia, situated in the north-eastern parts of the province of Prussia. This territory came to be known *Lithuania Minor* (Lith. *Mažoji Lietuva*) or Prussian Lithuania (Ger. *Preussisch Litauen*, currently, Kaliningrad Oblast of Russia). In Lithuania, the majority of Germans lived in the south-western

part of the country and along the borderline between the two countries. There is also a long history of hostility between the two nations: in the Middle Ages, Lithuanians were fighting off the Teutonic Order and the Livonian Brothers of the Sword, and in the twentieth century, the two nations were members of two opposing military alliances during World Wars I and II.

In Lithuania, numerous Germans earned their living by agriculture; many of them owned manors, whereas the rest were craftsmen or merchants. For this reason, Lithuanians always associated them with a higher social status. The Lutheran religion that Germans followed also distinguished them from local Lithuanians that practiced Catholicism (Anglickienė 2006: 45–46).

The majority of **Latvians** in Lithuania lived in the border areas. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many Lithuanians used to cross the border and work as agricultural labourers in Latvia, because Latvian farmers were richer and could pay better salaries. Another significant difference was the Lutheran religion practiced by Latvians. However, in contemporary Lithuania, Latvians are perceived as representatives of a kindred Baltic nation (the ethnic nickname *braliukas*, 'little brother', is used both in Lithuania and Latvia).

Table 1 shows the development of ethnocultural diversity in Lithuania during the past two centuries.

Table 1. *Ethnic groups in Lithuania (%) (Vaitiekus 1992: 12; Population 2013: 7)*

Nationality	**Year**						
	1857	**1897**	**1923**	**1959**	**1989**	**2001**	**2011**
Lithuanians	75.6	61.6	69.2	79.3	79.6	83.45	84.2
Russians	1.4	4.8	2.5	8.5	9.4	6.31	5.8
Poles	5.6	9.7	15.3	8.5	7.0	6.74	6.6
Byelorussians	0.3	4.7	0.4	1.1	1.7	1.23	1.2
Jews	10.7	13.1	8.3	0.9	0.3	0.12	0.1
Latvians	1.0	1.3	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.08	0.07
Germans	5.1	4.4	3.4	0.4	0.1	0.09	0.08
Others	0.3	0.4	0.3	1.0	1.6	2.0	1.95

Historical situation and ethnocultural diversity in Latvia

The first ethnic groups to inhabit the territory of present-day Latvia – the Baltic Finns and the Balts – established contacts with other ethnic communities at different times: Russians (10th–11th c.), Germans (12th–13th c.), the Roma (15th–16th c.), Poles (16th c.), Jews (16th c.), Swedes (16th c.), etc. (Apine & Dribins 1998).

The arrival of other ethnic communities into the territory of Latvia was determined by various circumstances and reasons: conquering new lands, forced migration, worsening economic or social conditions in their ethnic or previous homelands, searching for new opportunities, etc. Over time, the numerical proportion and social roles of the founding nation (Latvians) and other ethnic groups changed (Boldāne 2011: 68).

The arrival of **Germans** and their permanent settlement in the territory inhabited by the ancient Latvian tribes and the Livs took place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, during the Crusades, and was related to the spread of the Christian faith. The efforts of German traders to establish transit routes and local sales warehouses in the territory of Latvia played a significant role, too. German conquerors and their descendants introduced feudal relations in Latvia, and, in consequence, the Livonian German nobility emerged, who gradually became landowners and built their castles and manor houses (Dribins 2007: 141). These developments are depicted in Latvian folklore, especially in the tales and legends about castle mounds, castles, and manors, and in folk songs that describe relationships with the nobility and life at the manor.

After Russia's annexation of three regions of Latvia – Latgale (1772), Kurzeme and Zemgale (1795) – a German national minority group formed, united by mutual interests. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, they called themselves the Balts, but in the second half of the century identified themselves as the Baltic Germans (Ger. *Deutschbalten*, *Baltische Deutschen*) (Dribins 2007: 147).

Up to 1939, Germans were the third largest, and in the interwar period, along with the Jews, one of the two economically most influential ethnic minority groups in Latvia. However, after World War II, only a very small number of Germans remained in the country (Boldāne 2011: 154).

Historically, Latvians did not have deep and persistent contacts with the **Polish** nation and its culture; in different regions of Latvia, historical and cultural contacts were of different nature and importance. The Livonian War (1558–1583) led to the break-up of the Livonian Confederation; the territory of Latvia ended up under various levels of Polish (from 1569, Polish-Lithuanian) influence or direct rule. The Polish influence was the most noticeable in the territory of Latgale, which was incorporated into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in which Poles became the political majority; under the influence of the Polish élite, local German nobility was Polonized (Durejko 1995: 126). Polish influence remained strong even after the annexation of this territory by the Russian Empire in 1772. Just like Germans in other regions of Latvia, Poles introduced their own customs in Latgale. In Latgalian folklore, they are primarily associated with the nobility and the Catholic clergy. Both German

and Polish political élites introduced numerous cultural differences (in religion, language, education, architecture, art, social life) between the Latvians of Latgale and the Latvians living in other regions of the country.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, economic development and political events affected the social status and territorial distribution of Poles in Latvia. Even though the highest concentration of Poles remained limited to Latgale, their proportion increased in the cities and other areas in Latvia (Dribins 2007: 162). This also affected their choice of activity: agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, and communications. During the interwar period, a new professionally defined ethnic group emerged in Latvia, namely, Polish (also Lithuanian) farmers and seasonal workers on the largest farms (Boldāne 2011: 139).

In contemporary Latvia, **Lithuanians** are perceived as representatives of a kindred Baltic nation (the ethnic nickname *braļukas* 'little brother'), as a neighbouring nation, and as an ethnic minority. However, the long-term influence of different nations and cultures (Latvians were influenced by Germans, while Lithuanians – by Poles) and adherence to different Christian denominations (Latvians being Protestants, and Lithuanians – Catholics) have resulted in differences in mentality and the perception of the world (Boldāne 2011: 126). The Latvians of Latgale are an exception; since the territories of Latgale and Lithuania were united in the past, this resulted in certain shared features, for instance, the Catholic faith, conservative economic approaches, or the low level of education among farmers. Ethnic contacts between Latvians and Lithuanians are most prominently depicted in folklore texts recorded in the ethnic borderlands. Up to the present day, Lithuanians mainly live in the borderlands and in the largest cities of Latvia.

The census data (see Table 2) provides a rather precise record of the ethnic situation in Latvia from the end of the nineteenth century to the present day.

Table 2. *Ethnic groups in Latvia (%) (Central Statistics)*

Nationality	**Year**						
	1897	**1925**	**1935**	**1959**	**1989**	**2000**	**2011**
Latvians	68.3	73.4	76.9	62.0	52.0	57.7	62.1
Russians	12.0	10.5	8.8	26.6	34.0	29.6	26.9
Byelorussians	No data	2.1	1.4	2.9	4.5	4.1	3.3
Poles	3.4	2.8	2.6	2.9	2.3	2.5	2.2
Lithuanians	No data	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.2
Jews	7.4	5.2	4.9	1.8	0.9	0.4	0.3
Germans	6.2	3.8	3.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Estonians	–	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Others	2.7	0.6	0.5	2	4.8	4.1	3.8

NOMINATIVE FIELD: ETHNONYMS IN FOLKLORE TEXTS

In the Lithuanian and Latvian languages and folklore, ethnic groups that this article focuses on are called in many different ways; derived from different languages, these names were created and used over different periods of time.

In the Baltic languages, the exoethnonym[2] *vācieši* (Latvian) or *vokiečiai* (Lithuanian) is nowadays used to designate **Germans**. However, in Lithuanian folklore, other names can also be found: *prūsai, preisai* 'Prussians', *germanai* 'Germans', and, specifically after World War II, *fricai* 'Fritz', *naciai* 'Nazis', *niemcai* 'Germans' (from Russian *nemcy), hitlerininkai* 'Hitler's accomplices'. The label *kryžiuočiai* 'Crusaders' is also applied to Germans, even though it is rare and probably appeared quite late, under the influence of literature, seeking to add a certain historical component to literary texts (Anglickienė 2006: 185). In Lithuania, the word 'Prussian' has a geographical (= an inhabitant of Prussia and Lithuania Minor), national (= German), and religious (= Lutheran, Protestant) meaning. Notably, this ethnonym was frequently used to refer not only to the Lutherans of Prussia, but also to the followers of the Protestant faith in general (Slavėnienė 1991: 31), i.e., including the Lithuanians practicing Protestantism. Different names were sometimes applied synonymously; for example, a single song can mention both Germans and Prussians.

In Latvian folklore, Germans are referred to with an older form of the ethnonym *vāci*, the compound *vāczemnieki* 'inhabitants of Germany', and the latest denomination *vācieši*, as well as collocations *griķu, putru, kārklu* or *skalu vācietis* 'buckwheat, porridge, osier or sliver German', meaning 'that [Latvian] who unsuccessfully pretends to be German' (Mīlenbahs 1932: 490–492); on the other hand, the denomination *pusvācietis* 'half-German' found in folk songs, is explained by dictionaries as referring to 'a person who has one German parent', 'a Latvian (usually rich) who tries to be similar to Germans' (Grabis 1987: 477). Latvian folklorist J. Rozenbergs has observed that in Latvian folklore, ethnonyms *vāci* and *vācieši* are used to designate not so much the inhabitants of Germany but rather the Baltic German nobility of Latvia (Rozenbergs 2005: 23). The ethnonym *prūši* 'Prussians' is also mentioned in Latvian folklore. Having analysed the semantics of this lexeme in classical Latvian folk songs, Rozenbergs concludes that it is used to name both ancient Prussians of the Baltic descent and the inhabitants of German Prussia, i.e., Germans (Rozenbergs 2005: 46). In Latgalian folklore, the following designations of Germans have been found (phonetic variants): *vuoci, vuocīši, vuoczemnīši, pusvuocīts, pruši, brūži* (Kļavinska 2015b: 154).

In modern Baltic languages, two different denominations designate **Poles**: in Lithuanian *lenkai*, possibly borrowed from the Belarusian *lęchъ* 'Pole'

(Merlingen 1978: 72), and in Latvian *poļi,* supposedly borrowed from the Middle Low German *pōl* 'Pole' (Karulis 2001 [1992]: 707).

In Lithuanian folklore, especially older songs, Poles are also referred to as *paliokai*, which is an autonym of the Slavic origin (Pol. 'Polak').

In Latvian folklore, the ethnonym most frequently used to refer to Poles is *poļi,* also diminutives (singular) *polīts, poleniņš,* compound *apaļpoļi* 'round Poles'. In war, engagement, and wedding songs, ethnonyms *poļi* and *leiši* ('Poles' and 'Lithuanians') are usually placed next to each other and are used to mean 'foreigners, aliens' (Rozenbergs 2005: 86–87). In Latgalian folklore, lexemes *pūli, poļaki* are used to name Poles (Kļavinska 2015b: 144–145).

In Latvian historical sources and language, three variants for designating **Lithuanians** are found: with the root *liet-* (Lithuanian tradition), with the root *lit-* (Slavic tradition), and *leit-* (Latvian tradition). The primary source for all the three variants is considered to be the Lithuanian form **Lietuvā* <**Lētuvā* (Zinkevičius 2005: 185). In Latvian folklore, the most ancient ethnonym used for naming Lithuanians is *leiši*. Other designations for Lithuanians have been found in the texts recorded in Latgale: *lītuvīši, leitovīši, lītaunīki, litvaki* (Kļavinska 2015b: 159).

Ethnonyms naming **Latvians** are *latvieši*, the poetic form *latvji* (in Latvian), and *latviai* (in Lithuanian).

In Lithuanian folklore, Latvians do not have any other names, but in dialects a different syllable can be stressed. In standard Lithuanian, the first syllable is stressed – *lãtviai* 'Latvians' (singular *lãtvis*) – whereas in folklore texts, the same ethnonym is pronounced *latviaĩ* (singular *latvỹs)*, moving the stress onto the second syllable.

The same ethnonym can also bear different meanings in different nations. For example, Latvians use the word *leišiai* (i.e. 'Lithuanians') to call the Latvians of Lithuania, and Lithuanians around Akmenė (a Lithuanian town near the Lithuanian-Latvian border) also use the same ethnonym to refer to the local Latvians (Butkus 1995: 210), but in folk songs recorded in Vidzeme, the Latvians of Latgale tend to be designated by the ethnonyms *poļi* 'Poles,' and *leiši* 'Lithuanians', which acknowledge not ethnic but rather territorial belonging to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rozenbergs 2005: 67).

INTERPRETIVE FIELD. THE IMAGE OF DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS: LATVIAN AND LITHUANIAN EXAMPLES

The following section discusses how representatives of different nations are traditionally described in Lithuanian and Latvian folklore.

Lithuanian and Latvian folklore reflects two different sides of communication with **Germans**: hostility and peaceful neighbourhood. For this reason, the image of the German is also two-sided: the German can be pictured as a conqueror but also as a local nobleman or an artisan. However, a closer look at many folklore texts reveals a prevalent disdainful attitude towards this nation. It can be observed that in Latvian and Lithuanian folklore, negative attitude towards Germans is expressed both in the times of peace and in the times of war: Germans are referred to as belonging to another (higher) social stratum and criticized for their bad attitude to the native (local) population, often through comparisons to the devil. In folklore, Germans usually have features of the stereotypical 'stranger'. For example, folk jokes mock Germans' stupidity as well as negative features and habits of the German nobility, such as greed, cruelty, arrogance, laziness, cowardice, adventurism, passion for alcohol, seductive behaviour with local (Latvian) girls and married women, etc.

In narrative folklore, Germans, unlike other foreigners, such as Jews or the Roma, who can sometimes be deceived but more often deceive others, are always pictured as stupid. It can be explained by the fact that Germans were often enemies not only to Lithuanians and Latvians but also to many other nations. As Slovak researcher Gabriela Kiliánová notes, in folklore of many different nations, the image of the German is related to the image of the enemy: it is often characterized by power, cruelty, maliciousness, brutality, but also stupidity and ignorance (Kiliánová 1994: 110). In 1938, Lithuanian folklorist Jonas Balys noticed that in such languages as French, Italian, and Danish, the words used to refer to Germans also mean 'stupid', whereas in Bosnia such words mean 'an insidious person' (Balys 1938a: 516). This shows that Lithuanians and Latvians share an attitude to Germans that is similar to that of many other European nations.

In Lithuanian folklore, when **Poles** are mentioned, several themes dominate. Folk songs mention historical events: struggles of Lithuanians and Poles against common enemies in the seventeenth-nineteenth centuries and struggles against each other for the Vilnius region in the interwar period of the twentieth century, when Lithuanians and Poles became irreconcilable enemies. Other texts portray the Pole as a nobleman in a rather controversial manner, both positively and negatively. The Polish language and character traits often become an object of mockery as well (Anglickienė 2011).

In Latvian folklore, due to different historical circumstances, Poles are never depicted as allies. In war-related folk songs, in which Poles are usually portrayed alongside Lithuanians, their image is generalized to that of enemies. However, in the depiction of Poles, two tendencies can be observed: hostility in the representations of military and social relationships, and friendly attitudes in

engagement- and wedding-related folk songs. In folk texts recorded in Latgale, the image of the Pole is very prominent, and Poles are described as boastful, arrogant, and harsh noblemen, or sometimes poor because they have lost their wealth by gambling and leading dissolute lives.

Lithuanian folklore texts that refer to **Latvians** are known only in a relatively small area, mainly along the borderline, where most of the Latvian minority in Lithuania lived. Latvians are often portrayed as sorcerers. Different folk stories also tell about funny misunderstandings that occur due to the (mis)use of languages or religious/confessional (Catholics vs. Protestants) differences. It is also notable that Lithuanian folklore often portrays Latvians as richer than Lithuanians.

Lithuanians in Latvian folklore are represented as a neighbouring nation, similar to Poles and Russians. Their image is often generalized to depict the Lithuanian as a conqueror of Latvian lands; however, Lithuanians are also portrayed as potential marriage partners, sometimes desirable, but sometimes not. Another tendency is to foreground language use, as the languages the two nations speak are quite similar. Latvian folklore also depicts funny misunderstandings that occur due to the different meanings of similar words. Lithuanians are also portrayed as poorer and more foolish than Latvians.

The next section of the article goes on to focus on how Poles, Germans, Lithuanians, and Latvians are represented in the interpretive field of Lithuanian and Latvian folklore, where folklore examples of both nations repeat the same semes and where differences arise.

Religious field

Poles, Lithuanians, and Latgalians are Catholic; therefore, there are no folklore texts describing any religious disagreements or misunderstandings between them, while followers of other religions are often mocked and ridiculed. Lithuanian folklore reflects only certain disagreements between Catholic Poles and Lithuanians, mostly of historical-political character; for instance, during the nineteenth through to the mid-twentieth centuries, conflicts would sometimes arise in Lithuania because of the language of the church service, especially in multicultural and multilingual Catholic parishes, where people of different nationalities lived. Language-based conflicts became especially frequent in the Vilnius region during the interwar period, when the Lithuanian language was prohibited in the multi-ethnic parishes occupied by Poland. This induced people to speak about the injustices in the form of songs. For instance, when the relations between Lithuanian and Polish Catholics deteriorated in the parish of

Rodūnė after the church service in Lithuanian was prohibited, which quickly provoked hostility and fights, songs called "The troubles of Rodūnė" were created and became popular among the community members of the Lithuanian origin. The plots of these songs narrate specific situations and refer to Poles as offenders of Lithuanians (Ivanauskaitė 2004: 40).

In Latvian folklore, the religious aspect is not strongly emphasized. The primary object of mockery is exaggerated religiousness attributed to Catholic Poles and Lithuanians, as can be seen in the saying "Holy as a Lithuanian girl" (LSDF 17 19289) and in the following song: "I will not marry a Pole / And my sister will not marry one / A Pole says: / Catholicism is my love (darling)!" (LFK 1602, 4510). Other texts suggest that foreigners (Lithuanians) do not know how to pray correctly: "Foreign people cannot / Say prayers; / Like Lithuanian paupers / They mumble" (DS 19171-0).

As Germans and Latvians are predominantly Protestant, there are no indications of religious differences between these ethnic groups in Latvian. It is noteworthy that in Latgalian folklore Germans are not portrayed as representatives of a foreign religion either, possibly because during so-called Polish times the German nobility converted to Catholicism. Nonetheless, Latvian folklore often mocks German priests by depicting various misunderstandings during religious rituals, which arise due to insufficient command of the Latvian language.

As may be predicted, Lithuanian folklore depicts differences between the Catholic and Protestant confessions, namely, different liturgical actions, customs, and religious festivals. For instance, in one Lithuanian folk story, a well-dressed German woman enters a Catholic church, thinks that, during the Mass, all people stand up in her honour, and says, "Do not stand up, I am not a lady of such high importance" (Slančiauskas 1975: 115).

Some Lithuanian proverbs also reflect confessional differences: "You don't confess. Are you some kind of Prussian?" (LTR 346/223); "He does not cross himself as if he were some Prussian" (LTR 346/226). Some proverbs mock Lutheran pastors: "He moves his legs apart as a Prussian protestant" (LTR 346/218); "He talks drivel like a Prussian pastor" (LTR 5224/19/46). Even the Prussian god is mocked for being different: "He was so beautiful, distorted like the Prussian god" (LKZ 1976: 501); "Smiling as the Prussian Jesus in front of the moon" (LTR 5311/994). One etiological legend describes the circumstances that gave rise to the birth of Protestantism as a different confession: one young girl agrees to marry the devil and gives birth to a son, Martin (Luther), who later distorts the Christian faith (LTR 1542/395). Another legend also mentions that the Lutheran faith is an invention of the devil (Basanavičius 1928 [1903]: 312).

Cultural field

Lithuanian and Latvian folk songs can depict Poles as potential spouses, either desirable or not. In the latter case, cultural, social, and linguistic fields intertwine because the reasons why the spouse (Pole, German, Lithuanian or Latvian) is undesirable differ; not only different traditions but also social status, religion, and language are considered. Such songs portray different situations based on various oppositions: a warrior versus a ploughman, a nobleman versus a peasant. Any of the characters mentioned in the opposition may become the hero in a song. In Lithuanian songs of matchmaking, the image of the Pole is especially controversial. For example, a young girl does not want to marry a Pole, and thus the song highlights his negative traits, such as speaking a different language and occupying a different social status: "Oh you Poles, / So immoral, / You won't get the Lithuanian girl / Even if you pay in thalers" (Balys 1938b: 313); "I won't marry a young gentleman / I won't learn the Polish language, / I won't learn the Polish language, / I won't wish to become the mistress of the house" (Žemaitienė 1953: 60).

Latvian engagement songs also reveal an ambivalent attitude to Poles and Germans as potential spouses. There are folk songs in which a Polish or a German suitor or bride is depicted as undesirable because he or she is a representative of a foreign culture and social environment: "Five Poles want to marry me, / I pray to God, I will not marry: / If a ploughman marries me though, / I will marry him singing" (LTDz III: 10538); "Oh, my hard life, / I married a German bride! / She didn't go milling in winter, / Nor to the cornfield in summer; / In winter she spun silk, / In summer she twisted it" (LTDz VII: 22460).

Generally, Lithuanian folk songs poeticize the image of a peasant ploughman, who, in a song, can be contrasted with a person from another social layer, namely, a Pole: "Oh, everybody directed their eyes / All the crowd of Poles. / Is he a gentleman, / Or is he the Polish king's son? // Oh no, he's neither a gentleman / Nor Polish king's son, / He's his father's son, / Ploughman of the field" (Juška 1954: 1143).

In Lithuanian folk songs, noblemen or people of a higher social status are sometimes identified as Poles. In the latter case, the Pole is depicted as a desirable marriage partner, for instance: "Why did you promise me / To this rogue young man, / To this drunkard. // I was good / Only for the Polish soldier / The real nobleman" (Daukantas 1983: 66).

In a similar way, Latvian folk songs also express a desire to intermarry with wealthy Poles (in Latgale) and Germans (in other regions of Latvia), which is primarily guided by pragmatic reasons: "I will not marry anyone / Until I meet mine; / Mine has come from the Polish land / On a grey horse. / Whose horse is

dark brown, / That boy is the best" (LFK 1471, 582); "I was knitting gloves, / Thinking about a German; / The devil brought a farmhand / Wearing patched trousers" (LTDz VII: 7300). In folk songs, girls who are believed to be suitable to marry Germans are described as beautiful and rich, but also lazy.

In Latvian folk songs, the Lithuanian girl is usually portrayed as a desirable, hardworking wife: "Marry, brother, a Lithuanian girl, / She did not delay work: / Was squatting to milk cows, / Was nursing a baby over her shoulder" (LTDz IV: 12138).

Sometimes Latvian folklore depicts marriage to foreigners as a desirable event that might ensure good relationships with neighbours: "I matched my sister with a Russian, / I am marrying a Lithuanian girl. / I went to the Russian land, / I went to the Lithuanian land, / Everywhere I have sons-in-law and relatives" (LTDz II: 3844).

In Lithuanian belief legends, Latvians are often depicted as sorcerers who possess evil powers but who are also able to help others with their magic. Legends tell about harmed domestic animals: Latvian women are believed to have the power to cast an evil eye on domestic animals, take away milk from cows, while Latvian men are said to bewitch horses (Anglickienė 2006: 229).

In Lithuanian belief legends, Prussians and Germans are also said to be sorcerers. One text tries to explain this by referring to religious differences: "They all were Lutherans, not Catholics, and they knew different magic spells" (LTR 4220/56); "You can get various magic tools from a German, for example, guns with which one can shoot as many rabbits as one wishes" (LTR 2295/200). Germans are believed to be able to help both people (LTR 1690/275) and domestic animals with their magic spells (Slančiauskas 1975: 377). Therefore, it can be stated that in Lithuanian folklore, Germans more often than Latvians are represented as sorcerers who help, not harm.

It is not unusual for one nation to attribute magic powers to another, often neighbouring nation. It is based on the *our own – strange* dichotomy, in which all bad things and evil powers are attributed to the foreigner. This belief is universal; for example, Danes believe that Norwegians are skilled sorcerers, whereas Norwegians attribute magic powers to Finns, and the latter to the Saami; the Saami, in the meantime, believe that sorcerers live somewhere in the east, on the Kola Peninsula (Holbek 1996: 305).

Social field

Lithuanian and Latvian folklore often represents several social groups that foreigners belong to (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Social groups according to nationality*

Social group	**In Lithuanian folklore**	**In Latvian folklore**
Soldiers, conquerors of the land	Germans, Russians, Poles, Swedes, French	Germans, Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Estonians, Swedes, French
Masters, noblemen, landowners	Poles, Germans, Latvians	Germans, Poles
Priests	Germans, Russians, Jews	Germans, Poles, Lithuanians, Russians
Artisans	Germans, Russians	Germans, Russians
Traders and keepers of taverns	Jews	Jews

As the table indicates, Lithuanian and Latvian folklore represents different social groups in a similar manner; however, some differences can be noticed. This section of the article discusses the images of the Pole, the German, the Latvian, and the Lithuanian.

The image of the conqueror is most prominent in war-related folk songs, as well as legends and tales. As a rule, folklore usually belittles enemies, but praises and encourages its own warriors. Folk songs are extremely flexible and adaptive; different variants of the same song can depict different enemies, depending on the situation of the singer at a specific moment of time, as can be seen in a stanza of the Lithuanian war song "When we, three brothers, grow up" (type K 616):

> *Where will we three [brothers] ride,*
> *Where will we travel*
> *To a foreign country*
> *To the land of the king.* (Jokimaitienė & Žičkienė 1995: 348)

The final lines of different variants of the song mention different countries: *to the French land, to the Turkish land, to the country of Prussia, to the Moscovian land, to the Russian land, to the Lithuanian land, to Riga, to the foreign country* (Jokimaitienė & Žičkienė 1995: 368).

However, a significant number of war songs mention realia that do not allow for an easy substitution of the enemy character; this helps researchers determine the period of their creation and the nations mentioned in them. Songs sometimes tell on which side Lithuanians or Latvians fight and mention the

enemies; sometimes specific places, battles or distinguished military men are depicted. This renders the narrated events concrete and helps the audience recognize which specific battle is mentioned in the text (Anglickienė 2006: 115). It is also noteworthy that these folk songs reflect the differences of the historical situation in Lithuania and Latvia. Since the oldest times until the declaration of independence in the year 1918, the territory of contemporary Latvia was ruled by other powers and was often attacked by its neighbours, whereas Lithuanians had their own state or the commonwealth with Poles and thus were not always the ones attacked, but also attacked other nations, including those inhabiting the territory of the present-day Latvia.

Latvian folklore often portrays Germans as conquerors. For example: "Where is your land, German man, / Where are your horses? / Why have you come to this land / To eat my hard sweat?" (LTDz X: 31876). In war-related folk songs which depict the events of the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries, Poles, together with Lithuanians, are also often subsumed under a generalized image of a foreign conqueror: "Poles, Poles, Lithuanians, Lithuanians, / Why have you come to this land? / This land has warm sun, / Your kettle heads will break" (LFK 572, 328). It is a confirmed fact that, in the Middle Ages, Polish forces indeed participated in several wars in the territory of Livonia. After the Union of Lublin (signed in 1569), Lithuanians also participated in wars as part of the armed forces of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Lithuanian folk songs make minor references to the crusaders' aggression. Only folk songs of literary origin, which were created at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries mention crusaders as enemies, whereas war-historical songs usually depict fights of Poles and Lithuanians against their common enemies, namely Russians, Swedes, and Frenchmen in the sixteenth-nineteenth centuries. In the twentieth century, folk songs known as *Songs of the Liberation of Vilnius* became popular. They describe the loss of Vilnius as a terrible disaster to the Lithuanian nation, call Lithuanians to arms, depict Poles as self-willed, and ridicule them: "Hey, young brothers, take your guns and go! / We shall be banishing Poles out of our native land" (Ivanauskaitė & Gudaitė 1998: 110); "We are not afraid of those Poles, / We have banished them out of Lithuania. / We shall make pickets of Poles, / And shall put up fences of younger Poles" (Ivanauskaitė & Žičkienė 2004: 367). It is also noteworthy that, in the twentieth century, many older folk songs were adapted to the historical circumstances to depict German aggression during the two world wars.

In Lithuanian folklore, Poles are often depicted as noblemen (Pol. *szlachta*), whereas Germans and Latvians are represented as richer landowners on whose farms Lithuanians work as hired labourers. Joke tales often portray the German

or the Pole as a rich landowner, who becomes the victim of a swindler. Polish noblemen are also mentioned in war-historical and wedding songs. However, it is notable that in real life *szlachta* could also be people of Lithuanian origin who spoke Polish and had adopted Polish culture; for this reason, they were often referred to as Poles. Thus, it is the lifestyle of people of higher or lower social status that these folk songs highlight by sometimes accentuating the higher status as the desired one. For example, one etiological legend reveals the 'better' origin of Polish *szlachta*: if Lithuanians are made of dark rye flour, then Poles are made of white wheat flour (Balys 1940: 97, 104). Lithuanians living in the border areas saw that Latvian landowners were richer and could provide hired labourers with better nutrition; therefore, many chose to work on Latvian farms, and Lithuanian folklore reflects the situation by depicting Latvians as more successful farmers. A proverb says: "I have grown so poor that I have nothing else to do but to hire myself as a labourer on a Latvian's farm" (LTR 628/1449).

Latvian folklore prominently portrays the German and the Pole as 'foreigners', i.e., they are depicted not only as conquerors but also as ones belonging to a different social stratum (nobility, clergy, administrative and political power) and living in the city (Rīga) or on a manor. Several folk texts reveal the cruel attitude of the German and Polish nobility to Latvian serfs. Because of their cruelty, Germans are compared to the devil, and a desire to get revenge on them is expressed: "Oh, German, child of the devil, / Tomorrow you will be burned, / They will tie your hands, tie your legs, / Will put you on a steak" (LTDz X: 31861). It must be noted that in different versions of folk songs dealing with similar topics, recorded in different regions of Latvia, different ethnonyms (*polis* 'Pole' or *vācietis* 'German') are used as synonyms for the superordinate concept *kungs* 'master'.

In Latvian paroemias, especially in similes, the image of a poor foreigner is also revealed: "Naked as a Pole" (LSDF 527 1440); "Wailing as a Lithuanian pauper" (LSDF 877 2715); "Proud as a German pauper" (LSDF 759 619).

Linguistic field

In joke tales and anecdotes, humorous situations are often created by depicting representatives of two different nations or speakers of different dialects, who do not understand each other properly because of words or phrases that sound similar but may be understood differently in different languages or dialects. In one Lithuanian anecdote, a German enters a yard and asks a woman he meets for 'ajer' (Ger. *Eier* 'eggs'); she brings him a tuft of sweet-flag leaves (Lit. 'ajeras')

(Janonis & Janonienė 1982: 900). In communication between Latvians and Lithuanians, humour is often based on lexis with different semantics in the two Baltic languages: for instance, in Latvian, *druska* means 'a little', whereas in Lithuanian *druska* means 'salt'. In communication with foreigners living in the territory of Latvia or Lithuania, the grounds for comic misunderstandings are poor Latvian or Lithuanian language skills.

Latvian folk songs reveal a tolerant attitude towards other languages; moreover, foreign language skills are highly valued, especially when portraying social life in the borderland areas: "Living in the borderland, / I use language in three ways; / Which people propose, / That language I speak" (LTDz IV: 13224). Songs also suggest that language is not the only feature of a person's ethnic identity: "Am I a Lithuanian, / If I speak the Lithuanian language, / If I speak the Lithuanian language, / If I am wearing a Lithuanian suit?" (LTDz XI: 55989).

Humoristic folk songs collected in south-eastern Lithuania, inhabited by bilingual speakers of Lithuanian and Polish, are often based on wordplay. Different lines of the same song may be sung in different languages:

> *Mūs Onutė pasipūtė* [Lt]
> *Pačy do mnie kšyvu,* [Pl]
> *Aš Onuty pasiputy* [Lt]
> *Zafonduja piva.* [Pl]
> *O tas alus alutėlis* [Lt]
> *Z jienčmenių robionas* [Pl]
> *Ir dėl mūsų jis linksmumo* [Lt]
> *Mielių doložonas*. [Pl]
> (VDU 1089/23)
> Our Ann is so stuck-up / Looks at me askew / To our Ann who's so stuck-up / I'll offer a beer. // And that beer, good beer / Is made from hop / And to make us all cheerful / We have added yeast.

Similarly, the influence of the Polish language is also present in Latvian humorous folk songs (Kļavinska 2015a: 271), for instance, in the following folk song recorded in Latgale:

> *Kristamāmeņ, dzjadzuliņ* [Ltg 'godmother, aunt'],
> *Kai* [Ltg 'how'] *pa poļsku* [Pl 'in Polish'] *havaric* [Bel 'to speak']*!*
> *Čuda čuda, dzīva dzīva* [Pl cudo, dziwo 'miracle']
> *Ja pa poļsku* [Pl 'I in Polish'] *havarila* [Bel 'spoke']*:*
> *Sivyi koņ, jasna griva* [Pl 'grey horse, light mane'],
> *Pakausteiti kumeliņi* [Ltg 'shod colts'].
> (LTDz XI: 56050)

Due to long-term linguistic contacts, the Latvian language also contains many barbarisms borrowed from the German language, which also reflect in folklore: *Visi mani bērniņi vāciski mācēja: / Maizīte brotīte, karotīte lepelīte* 'All my children could speak German: / Bread *brotīte* (from German *Brot* 'bread'), spoon *lepelīte* (from German *Löffel* 'spoon')' (LTDz I: 2207).

A person's vague mumbling or unintelligible speech is often compared to a German's speech in both Lithuanian and Latvian folklore: Lt "Speaks like a German, it's not possible to understand anything" (LKZ: 913); Lv "Tattles as an osier German" (LSDF 556 6537). Latvian paroemias also depict the garrulity of Lithuanians: "Tattles as a fairy-tale Lithuanian" (LSDF 116 12415).

Perceptive field

Lithuanian and Latvian folklore make only minor references to the foreigners' appearance (their clothing and physical traits); they are usually not described in detail and are mentioned only as secondary attributes of 'otherness'.

Lithuanian belief legends and tales of the stupid devil often depict the devil as a German gentleman, who stands out among others because of his clothes. In some folk narratives, the devil can even be directly labelled as *vokietis* 'German', usually in the diminutive form *vokietukas*: he walks dressed in German clothes, wearing a hat, and leaning on a walking stick. According to researchers of Lithuanian folklore, such stigmatization of German people derives from historical experience, namely, the hatred towards German crusaders (Vėlius 1986: 20). The image of the devil in depicting Germans is also frequent in Polish, Latvian, and Estonian folklore. However, as pointed out by Lithuanian researcher J. Balys, ancient Prussians imagined the devil as a Pole (Balys 1938a: 511). In a similar way, Slavs often depict the devil, a water spirit, and a forest spirit as a German, a Frenchman, or a Jew, and sometimes as a Lithuanian (Tolstoi 1999: 416). Not only in the perceptive field, but also in religious, cultural, social, and linguistic fields, characteristics of the devil (evil spirit) are often attributed to foreigners, followers of other religions, or representatives of other social layers that stand out for their particular traits.

Lithuanian folklore underscores not only German people's different clothing, i.e., lordly and urban clothes as opposed to peasant wear, but also their physical appearance as can be seen, for example, in the saying 'Wheezes as a Prussian soldier' (Jucevičius 1959: XXVI), which is used to describe an obese person. The figure of the German is also frequent in riddle formulas: "A short blunt German dressed in a bony coat / dressed in seven shirts" (the answer

is a nut / an onion) (LKZ 914). A fat, round object coded in the riddle is often described as an obese and big-bellied German man.

In Latvian folklore, the image of the German is contradictory. Folk songs mention items of clothing that are identified as German and are described as beautiful, for instance, a velvet suit, silk trousers, a sailor's cap (LTDz X: 52914). Moreover, in one text Germans are acknowledged as trendsetters: "Hair cut the German way" (LFK 1940, 7524).

On the one hand, such examples emphasize the social and material superiority of Germans over Latvians. On the other hand, just like in Lithuanian folklore, Germans are compared to the devil, typically when referring to their appearance: "Hey, German, child of the devil, / Boots made by the devil!" (LTDz X: 52520). The description of the German body shape is also contradictory: sometimes it is depicted as slim, but sometimes as a fat or corpulent figure; slim legs (DS 28266-4), long hair (DS 31893-0), a long, crooked nose (LTDz X: 31852) are mentioned as well.

Descriptions of the appearance of Poles in Latvian folklore usually mention certain items of clothing (attesting to their social and material status), which distinguish a Pole from a Latvian: a black suit, a blue overcoat, a penny-bun shaped hat (LTDz X: 52896, 357). Lithuanian folklore, in contrast, does not make any reference to the appearance of Poles.

The appearance of Lithuanians is rarely given attention to in Latvian folklore. For example, in a riddle where the lexeme designating Lithuanians, *lietauneica*, stands for 'reed', this is possibly due to some free associations with their appearance (slim, tall, silk ribbons in the hair) (Uļanovska 2011: 218). No examples of Lithuanian folk texts that mention the appearance of Latvians were found during this research.

It may be observed that both Lithuanian and Latvian folklore quite rarely refer to the appearance of Germans, Poles or Lithuanians/Latvians because their physical traits are quite similar. In most cases only different clothing is accentuated, stating that the person of another nationality wears fancier 'lordly' clothes, i.e., has a higher status in society.

The field of emotional and intellectual evaluation

As a rule, folklore portrays desires, goals, and wishes of 'a humble person', typically, a peasant, who then judges certain features and personality traits to be positive or negative. For this reason, folklore texts often reflect the opposition between the poor/peasant and the rich/landowner.

Lithuanians and Latvians viewed pride, pretentiousness, and boasting (usually attributed to the Polish *szlachta* or landlords) as negative features; this is also reflected in folklore. Lithuanian paroemias describe Poles as boasters: "Boasts himself as a Pole" (LTR 30/322), or liars: "The truth of the Pole is ridden by the devil in the marsh" (LTR 1854/5/1). Poles are also said to be difficult to get on well with: "You will not be able to get along with the Pole" (LTR 200/56). In the Lithuanian language, Poles' pride or arrogance is given a specific name, 'polskas honoras' (Pl *polskie honor*, 'Polish arrogance'). The latter saying is still well-known and used in contemporary Lithuania.

By analogy, many Latvian folk texts also mock unlikable Polish character traits, such as bragging, arrogance, and stinginess; this can be seen in such sayings as "bragging as a Polish nobleman" (LSDF 477 306); "a rich, but very stingy Polish nobleman" (Trūps 1968: 128). Poles' reluctance to work is ridiculed as well: "When Latvians were ploughing land, / The Pole was shaking his trousers, / When Latvians were eating bread, / The Pole was smacking his lips" (LFK 828, 18241).

Lithuanian paroemias also mock the Polish language because of its peculiarities. For example, Poles, both in the past and nowadays, tend to address each other as *pan, pani* (Pl), i.e., 'Sir,' 'Madam'; Lithuanians consider this to be excessive politeness, as is obvious from sayings such as "The Pole calls even a dog a *sir*" (LTR 209/49/189); "Don't be politer than a Pole" (LTR 4102/124).

Lithuanian folk songs that were created during the interwar period and recount the loss of Vilnius and its liberation, often mention the "sly Pole, a wicked neighbour" (Ivanauskaitė 2004: 41–42).

Lithuanian proverbs also maintain the pattern of calling Germans fools: "Foolish as a German" (Lebedys 1958: 573); "Stupid as a Prussian after lunch" (LTR 2199/31/32); "Would a German understand it the way a Lithuanian does" (Lebedys 1958: 595). Only a few proverbs mention good traits of Germans: "Tidy as a German" (LTR 390/140/412) or "Fair as a German" (LTR 390/140/574). The ability of Germans to manage their property is reflected in the following proverbs: "The German lives better on the stone than the Russian on the black soil and water" (LKZ 1976: 913); "The Pole makes shit from wax, whereas the German makes wax from shit" (LTR 4733/137/2).

In Latvian folklore, the image of the German is contradictory. On the one hand, the German is represented as a fool, as can be seen in the tale in which a witty Latvian farmer outwits gullible Germans (Uļanovska 2011: 283–290)). A German person's stupidity sometimes manifests in his inability to manage a farm: "A German has as much intelligence / As a little child: / Yesterday he sowed peas in the cornfield, / Today he is going to see / If they have grown big, / If they have started flowering" (LTDz X: 52909). On the other hand, Germans

may also be depicted as smart people because it is from them that Latvians sometimes seek advice (LTDz X: 52800).

Lithuanian paroemias can also be critical of Latvians: "He has as little shame as a Latvian" (LTR 64/408); "He taught honesty as a Latvian to his children" (TZ 1928: 624).

In popular Latvian sayings, Lithuanians are depicted as fools: "Thick as a Lithuanian" (LSDF 1268 490).

In paroemias, two nations are often compared. The meaning of such paroemias, and their positive or negative connotations depend on the context. Moreover, the same saying can often be used both in its direct and figurative sense: Lt "Made a bargain as a Latvian with a Jew" (LTR 3116/581), Lt "The Latvian is honest before lunch, whereas the German is honest after lunch" (LTR 4883/649), Lt "He oppresses one as a Latvian oppresses a Lithuanian" (LTR 3116/581); Lv "Arguing as a Lithuanian does with a Pole" (LSDF 1552 343); Lv "The German has as much honour as the Gypsy has work" (LSDF 1808 81).

CONCLUSIONS

Lithuanians' and Latvians' relationships with and attitudes towards foreigners were influenced by historical, political, economic, cultural, religious, social, and psychological factors. Folklore is a reflection of real life and, at the same time, of culture, mentality, the way of living, and values of a specific society. Both in reality and in folklore, a foreigner as well as any other person or phenomenon tends to be stereotyped. Folklore has its own ways to transform reality and uses its own stylistic devices. A stranger is seen within a predetermined frame. Instead of individualising, folklore portrays types, not characters. When creating a type, two or three similar features are brought to the foreground, resulting in an oversimplified image of a stranger.

Contextual semantics of ethnonyms designating foreigners reveals a clear dichotomy between the positively marked *our own* and the often negatively marked *strange*. Negative attitude is demonstrated by emphasizing certain traits of strangers, such as speaking a different language, belonging to a different region, social class, culture (traditions), or being marked by a different temperament.

Folklore texts, informed by historical experience of dealing with foreigners, show that ethnonyms are open to semantic transformation in time and space. For instance, in Latvian folklore, the formulaic repetition of the ethnonyms *poļi, poļi, leiši leiši* 'Poles, Poles, Lithuanians Lithuanians' is used to refer to 'foreigners, foreign conquerors' in general, the formula dating back to when the territory

of Latgale was part of the Polish-Lithuanian State. In Lithuanian folklore, the ethnonym *Prussian* has a generalized meaning of 'the other, strange' and emphasizes belonging to a different geographical location, nation, and religion.

Because of similar historical and social conditions, Lithuanian and Latvian folklore portrays Germans and Poles in a similar manner. In real life, they often had a higher status, and thus in folklore, they also are depicted as masters or landowners and their negative character traits are revealed quite distinctly. Folklore texts of different genres often portray local peasants' encounters with Germans and Poles, during which the foreigners are usually depicted as losers and stupid people, whose conduct is improper, and who are depreciated, mocked, and even humiliated.

Although they are neighbouring nations, Lithuanians and Latvians are portrayed rather rarely in each other's folklore. In earlier (seventeenth-eighteenth-century) Latvian folklore, the ethnonym *Lithuanians* is often used to mean 'conquerors', whereas more recent nineteenth-twentieth-century folklore often describes similar everyday realities of the neighbouring nations, especially in the border regions, and thus mostly depicts minor confessional and cultural (traditions-related) differences. In Lithuanian folklore, the image of the Latvian as a sorcerer is quite common. Many short humorous folklore texts are based on wordplay and focus on minor differences between the lexis of the two Baltic languages.

Variants of the same folklore narrative may depict different foreigners. For instance, both the Pole and the German may be addressed as 'sir', or a person of any different nationality may be called 'stupid' if they behave in an unusual manner, even though different models of behaviour are influenced by confessional and social contexts as well as different customs and traditions. The usage of a particular ethnonym depends on what foreigners the local peasants met in their close environment.

ARHIVAL SOURCES

LFK = Archives of Latvian Folklore, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia

LTR = Archive of Lithuanian Folklore, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

VDU = Archive of the Department of Cultural Studies, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas

NOTES

[1] Until the beginning of the twentieth century, people in Lithuania and eastern Latvia generally assumed that Catholicism was a Polish faith. For instance, during the census of 1897 in tsarist Russia, Catholic Lithuanians, Latvians, and Byelorussians were often registered as Poles, because when census recorders asked them who they were, the latter would answer: "Catholics".

[2] Exoethnonym is a name given to an ethnos by other ethnic groups, most frequently by the neighbouring ones.

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Laima Anglickienė is Associate Professor and Head of Department of Cultural Studies at Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania. Her main research areas are contemporary folklore, ethnic stereotypes and ethnic processes in the Baltic region.

laimute.anglickiene@vdu.lt

Antra Kļavinska is Senior Research Fellow and Associate Professor at Rezekne Academy of Technologies, Latvia. Her research interests are related to ethnolinguistics, applied linguistics and corpus linguistics.

antra.klavinska@rta.lv

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CHALLENGING HEGEMONIC GENDER NORMS IN EMMA DONOGHUE'S "THE TALE OF THE ROSE" AND DISNEY'S *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*

Priyanka Banerjee
Junior Research Fellow
Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad, India
pkb2912@gmail.com

Rajni Singh
Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad, India
rajnisingh18@gmail.com

Abstract: While heteronormativity remained at the core of the classic fairy tale, a queer subtext existed in the form of subtle symbolic codes. By reflecting the changing socio- cultural discourses about sexuality and gender in time, the representation of queer sexuality in fairy tales has also developed. This paper attempts a queer reading of the revisioning of Madame Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" in Emma Donoghue's "The Tale of the Rose" and the 2017 Disney version. This paper demonstrates how Emma Donoghue's adaptation deconstructs the heteronormativity of Beaumont's tale by dismantling the binaries of Beauty/Beast and man/woman and represents queer sexuality and desire through multi-layered language. This paper also examines how in the Disney version the story takes a new dimension in close proximity to twenty-first century media culture and lends itself to queer interpretation.

Keywords: Beauty and the Beast, Disney, queer, revisioning, The Tale of the Rose

THE FOLK ORIGIN OF MADAME BEAUMONT'S "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST"

Unlike most other classic fairy tales, the tale "Beauty and the Beast" developed simultaneously in both written and oral forms. The oral folk tradition of the tale comprises stories about animal bridegrooms, such as Apulieus's "Cupid and

Psyche" and Straparola's "The Pig King", and the Grimm Brothers' "The Frog King". While the oral tradition had males as well as females as animals, tales with females as beasts fell out of favour while tales with animal bridegrooms continued to flourish. Maria Tatar has read this as an illustration of gender becoming destiny in fairy tales (Tatar 1987: 177). These folktales involving animal bridegrooms emphasized a heroically suffering female protagonist whose patience and empathy transforms the animal into a human. As the tales entered into print, the animal bridegrooms were transformed into enchanted humans who had been cursed by a fairy in order to avoid the representation of sodomy. This was part of the process of editing and sanitization of the oral folktales as they were documented and circulated through print and revised over the course of several editions. The motif of Beauty and the Beast proliferated in the popular culture of different countries in various forms, such as Jean Cocteau's 1946 film *La Belle et la Bête* (1946), *Beauty and the Beast* TV series (1987), the 1991 *Beauty and the Beast* animated cartoon, and the more recent (2017) live action remake starring Emma Watson and Dan Stevens. Sergei Aksakov's *The Scarlet Flower* (1858), a Russian literary variant of the tale type "Beauty and the Beast", has also inspired adaptations in multiple media, such as the animated film *The Scarlet Flower* (1952) directed by Lev Atamanov, and the 1978 live action film *The Scarlet Flower* directed by Irina Povolotskaya.

As Maria Tatar and Jack Zipes have observed, when oral folktales were published as *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* by the Grimm Brothers from 1812 to 1857, they edited and censured the tales progressively (Tatar 1999: 367, Zipes 2006: 62–63). While heterosexual details were removed painstakingly, queer subtexts and non-normative alliances and desires were left intact (Turner & Greenhill 2012: 2). With the passage of time, the popularity of these classic tales has skyrocketed, and they have proliferated in multiple forms in contemporary times (Zipes 1995: 22–31). Many postmodern adaptations of fairy tales represent queer elements more explicitly or reinterpret the classic tale in ways that foreground queer elements like non-normative sexuality, gender, and desire or counter-hegemonic relationships. Anne Sexton's "Rapunzel"[1] reimagines the classic tale by centring it around the relationship between Mother Gothel and Rapunzel. Cristina Bacchilega notes that when fairy tales are adapted in different forms, they may reach into a wide range of discourses and become social activism (Bacchilega 2013: 35). Social activism, in fact, was an important aim of the project of feminist revisioning of classic fairy tales, which was started in the 1980s by Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood, Anne Sexton, and others who questioned patriarchal and hetero-normative ways of expressing sexuality and gender roles. In an interview with Hillary Dziminski, Emma Donoghue has asserted that her book *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* is a part of

social activism. She has revisioned the classic tales in the unique format of interconnected short stories told by one female narrator to the next, thus reconstructing a female oral storytelling tradition. "The Tale of the Rose" is one of the tales which reinterprets Madame Beaumont's classic "Beauty and the Beast".

"Beauty and the Beast" is one such tale which has been adapted into multiple forms and mediums right from the written text, from television series (2012–2016) and animated films to a live action musical. This paper takes up three popular adaptations of the tale of "Beauty and the Beast": Madame Leprince de Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast", which became the foundational text for all later adaptations, Emma Donoghue's short story "The Tale of the Rose", and Disney's live action musical *Beauty and the Beast*. It analyses the changing symbolism of Beauty and Beast corresponding to changing definitions of masculinity and femininity and examines the representation of non-normative desire in different media – print and the screen – and explores the factors responsible for such representation, be it the intended audience, audience expectation, or the socio-cultural milieu in which the particular adaptation was created. Further on an attempt is made to demonstrate how Emma Donoghue's adaptation and the Disney live action musical engage in the process of questioning hegemonic culture through the representation of queer desire and changing gender roles.

HETERONORMATIVITY IN MADAME LEPRINCE DE BEAUMONT'S "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST"

The most influential and authoritative version of the tale of Beauty and the Beast[2] is the one written by Madame Leprince de Beaumont, "La Belle et la Bête", published in 1757 in *Magasin des Enfants.*[3] She drew directly from Madame Villeneuve's *La Belle et la Bête*[4] (1740) and censored its representation of explicit sexuality so that Beauty does not have to sleep with the Beast in order to transform him into a human. Bruno Bettelheim and other psychologists have regarded beasts in folktales as concealed symbols of sexuality which children regard with disgust before discovering their beauty (Talairach-Vielmas 2010: 275). They have interpreted the beast as a symbol of male sexuality which the female protagonist must learn to accept (ibid.). The sexual symbolism of this tale has been explained in the context of arranged marriages common during the period by Maria Tatar (1987: 177). Noting that this tale has developed almost exclusively in a female setting, she comments: "That story and others like it may have been told by women to women in the context of covert reflections on maturity, marriage and sexuality" (ibid.). She has interpreted the

transformation of the prince into a beast by sorceresses for no apparent reason as a literalization of old wives' wisdom about masculine sexuality as beastly (ibid.). Moreover, the beast is symbolic of the anxieties of educated young women about entering arranged marriages. Tales about beasts or monsters often have a newly married woman or one about to marry as a central female figure, with the Beast or monster as the bridegroom (Tatar 1987: 170). In these tales the young women are coerced into marriage by their parents, due to which they may perceive their husbands as beasts who can mutilate or murder them (ibid.). But the animal bridegrooms in the literary fairy tales are decorous while the human bridegrooms are boorish (ibid.). This was a strategy to drive home the message that beauty lies within. It also highlighted that qualities like kindness and consideration for others are more desirable in a husband than wit and good looks. Donoghue's tale deconstructs this context of the heteronormative marriage in the narrative by replacing the male beast with a female one, a female first-person narrator, and the use of symbolically charged evocative language.

FROM NORMATIVE TO QUEER: DONOGHUE'S LESBIAN BEAST

In her interview at the Civic Theatre, Emma Donoghue commented on how the late Roisin Conroy of Attic Press, Ireland's feminist publishing house, had first suggested the idea of retelling classic fairy tales to her as part of the 1980s–1990s feminist project of revisionism (Dziminski 2018). Donoghue had finally published it with Virago Books in the USA under the Young Adult category although she had written it for adults (Donoghue 2017). The book was published in 1997 and was adapted into a play by Donoghue in 2001. She has also observed how the stories in this collection have resonated in different ways with new audiences over time as movements like Me Too gained momentum (Dziminski 2018). This has put the focus squarely on power struggles between men and women (ibid.). Similarly, LGBTQ activism too made great strides during the mid-twentieth century. Starting with rioting at Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village in New York, in 1969, the 1970s and 1980s saw demands for the rights of the LGBTQ community in the United States by the Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. Groups like Outrage! campaigned for social and legal reforms in the United Kingdom, and the International Lesbian and Gay Association was created in England in 1978. Debates about the rights of the LGBTQ community became part of the mainstream discourse and changed the socio-cultural landscape. These socio-cultural developments and greater

acceptance of non-normative ways of expressing sexuality and gender provided a fertile ground for Donoghue's project of queering classic fairy tales.

At the beginning of "The Tale of the Rose", the female narrator remains trapped within the androcentric framework of the classic tale. When her father tells her that she is beautiful, she consults a mirror and is disappointed by the result: "My oval mirror showed me a face with nothing written on it" (Donoghue 1997: 28). She rejects her suitors because she wants magic and "something improbable and perfect as a red rose just opening" (ibid.). When her father loses his money and her suitors reject her, she looks into the mirror: "I looked in my mirror, and saw, not myself, but every place I'd never been" (ibid.). Here the mirror functions like Laura Mulvey's male gaze which interpellates feminine subjectivity.

The function of the mirror in delimiting feminine subjectivity in fairy tales has a long tradition. Literary critics as diverse as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar as well as Luce Irigaray have interpreted the mirror as a patriarchal standard of judgement with which women evaluate their sense of self-worth (Schanoes 2009: 6). In "The Looking Glass from the Other Side", Luce Irigaray too has observed that the image of the woman on the other side of the looking glass remains trapped and frozen (Irigaray 1985: 14). In *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985), Irigaray has noted how in patriarchy women function as mirrors which validate men's sense of self-worth. So, they do not have positive subjectivity of their own: "[women] must liberate themselves from negative definitions and mirrors and start to assign a positive subjectivity to themselves" (Irigaray 1985: 54). When real characters in a fairy tale become reflections, they lose their agency and become characters in someone else's story (Schanoes 2009: 18). The protagonist in "The Tale of the Rose" remains similarly trapped in the story as she judges herself according to patriarchal and heteronormative standards by her reflection in the mirror. This changes when she goes to the Beast's castle where she is provided a luxuriously furnished room and other amenities among which is a big mirror: "The great mirror showed me whatever I wanted to see" (Donoghue 1997: 34). The protagonist develops the agency to construct her own story and the mirror reflects her fantasies:

> *I sat … before the gold mirror. I looked deep into the pool of my face, and tried to imagine what the beast looked like. The more hideous my imaginings, the more my own face seemed to glow. Because I thought the beast must be everything I am not: dark to my light, rough to my smooth, hoarse to my sweet.* (Donoghue 1997: 35)

Here the protagonist's construction of the beast is one predicated on difference from herself – the 'other'. This is symptomatic of the representation of femininity in Western discourse as the other of man. The discursive construction of non-masculine and non-normative sexualities is predicated on their difference as other from the heterosexual male. As Teresa de Lauretis has observed:

> *The construction and appropriation of femininity in Western discourse has had the effect of securing the heterosexual social contract by which all sexualities, all bodies, and all "others" are bonded to an ideal ideological hierarchy of males.* (Lauretis 1984: 158)

Donoghue's female protagonist continues this tradition by referring to the beast as a shadow: "When I walked on the battlements under the waning moon, the beast was the shadow I threw behind me" (Donoghue 1997: 35). The imaging of the Beast as a shadow further reinforces that the Beast is a liminal figure who exists in the female protagonist's perception and in androcentric discourse as an inscrutable figure who cannot be defined in her own right in accordance with the normative standards. The trope of the lesbian as a shadow presence is symptomatic of the fact that the lesbian exists as a subversive figure that cannot be categorized neatly by normative discourses. Later the Beast is revealed to be a woman in disguise who chose not to marry male suitors, masked her face, and isolated herself from society.

The androcentric narrative point of view of the classic fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast is finally ruptured when the protagonist removes the mask of the Beast: "I saw that the Beast was a woman" (Donoghue 1997: 39). The sudden revelation of the beast as a woman deconstructs the universal masculine subject position and makes the readers question their assumptions about a masculine beast. Jennifer Orme has referred to this moment of discovery as a queer moment which "disrupts Beauty's reading of her own desires and leads her to continue to unmask other normative discourses she has never before questioned" (Orme 2010: 125). In Donoghue's story, the Beast becomes a symbol of feminine sexuality and lesbian desire instead of a metaphor of masculine and heteronormative sexuality of the classic tale.[5]

When the protagonist removes the many layers which cover the face of the beast, she observes: "…hair black as rocks under water. I saw a face white as old linen. I saw lips red as a rose just opening" (Donoghue 1997: 39). This description is reminiscent of the characterization of Snow White in the tale of the Grimm Brothers: "a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony" (Grimm, J. & Grimm, W. 1980). The representation of Snow White in the Grimm Brothers' tale has been defined by scholars such as Sandra Gilbert

and Susan Gubar as well as Cristina Bacchilega as a patriarchally constructed feminine ideal. In the words of Bacchilega: "Whether 'written' by the narrator's words, author(iz)ed by masculine desire, or imaged by the mirror, Snow White is constructed child-woman whose snow-white features and attitude are assumed to conform to nature in a powerfully metaphoric way" (1997: 35). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have termed Snow White as "patriarchy's angelic daughter" (1979: 36) – childlike, docile, and submissive. She is the polar opposite of her stepmother – a powerful adult figure represented as monstrous (Gilbert & Gubar 1979: 36–37, 39). In this schema, Snow White represents the ideal of patriarchally constructed femininity[6] both by the heteronormative discourses of feminine beauty and as desired by her stepmother.

As Judith Butler has noted, we perceive the physical body through the epistemic regime of sex (Butler 1990: 115). The fragmentation and sexing of the female body through the fetishization of some particular attributes is part of the processes of coding of bodies that construct them as sexual. The graphic symbolism of white as snow, red as rose, and black as ebony has been interpreted by Cristina Bacchilega as "beauty and purity of white, the transformative powers of red or gold, the ritual and sexual death of black" (2013: 33). Donoghue's deconstruction of an established sexual signifying economy with a new one defamiliarizes the symbols and divulges the regime of control over the representation of female bodies as well as lesbian ones. Donoghue humanizes the body by associating it with rocks under water signifying a body whose identity is fluid and constructed through many reifications by oral folktales, Disney's animated films, the language of classic print fairy tales and popular culture in terms of what constitutes a beautiful female body. The simile of old linen associated with clothes further emphasizes the difference between representations of the lesbian body and the body as a subject. The description of the lips as a red rose just opening serves to preserve the sexual undertone while defamiliarizing it at the same time.

When Madame Villeneuve adapted the tale of Beauty and the Beast from the oral tradition, she introduced the rose in the framework. The rose has been variously interpreted as a declaration of the Beast's love for Beauty, ephemeral youth and virginity, even Christ or love (Hamburger 2018: 53). In Jean Cocteau's film,[7] the rose has been interpreted as connecting the manliness of the Beast symbolized by the thorns with the femininity of Beauty as a rose in terms of menstruation and deflowering (ibid.). It is also a symbol of regeneration in Apulieus' *The Golden Ass*, in which the narrator transforms from a donkey to human form after eating a crown of vermillion roses (Knapp 2003: 319). When Madame Beaumont revised the tale, she retained the symbol of the rose. Later adaptations, such as the Disney animated film *Beauty and the*

Beast (1991), have made the rose even more prominent as the Beast preserves the rose covered with a glass jar given to him by the sorceress. With the passage of time, the rose keeps shedding petals, signalling the passage of time. Here the rose is a symbol of the temporality of youth and the longing for love. In "The Tale of the Rose", Donoghue defamiliarizes the popular symbol by changing it subtly and using it in a different context. In Donoghue's tale the female protagonist asks for "something improbable and perfect as a red rose just opening" (Donoghue 1997: 27) from her male suitors at the beginning of the tale and also later, when her father offers her to choose a gift. Her father brings her a blood-red rose from the Beast's castle, which she keeps against the mirror. When she overstays her visit to her father, the rose dries up and is destroyed. She returns to the Beast's castle swiftly and finds the Beast in the rose garden. After removing many veils from the Beast's face, she finds "lips red as a rose just opening" (Donoghue 1997: 39). In Donoghue's tale the rose is a symbol of feminine sexuality and longing for love, but it is also a symbol of lesbian desire. The description of the rose as magical, improbable yet perfect for the protagonist invests it with a new symbolic significance which deconstructs Beaumont's symbolism of the rose. In Donoghue's tale the rose becomes a powerful positive symbol of same-sex desire which deconstructs the representation of lesbian desire and relationship as monstrous.

In *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire*, Teresa de Lauretis has discussed the presentation of desire in patriarchal and heterosexual signifying economy:

> *In all the culturally dominant forms of representation that surround us, from television to museum art … desire is predicated on sexual difference as gender, the difference of the woman from man or femininity from masculinity… and not as difference between heterosexual and homosexual, or straight and gay sexuality.* (Lauretis1994: 110–111)

The tale of Beauty and the Beast is especially invested in this signifying economy and used as a common trope in romance narratives in both print and visual culture. Donoghue's attempt to rewrite the romance narrative of two female subjects in "Beauty and the Beast" from the point of view of a female protagonist deconstructs the traditional format. Referring to this, the protagonist comments: "This was a strange story, one I would have to learn a new language to read, … I struggled to make sense of our story, and before I knew it was summer come again, and the red roses just opening" (Donoghue 1997: 39–40). The change of seasons from winter to summer associated with rebirth and the opening of red roses symbolizes their flourishing love.

In her interview with Abigail Palko, while responding to a question about her contribution to public conversation about LGBTQ activism, such as coming out or the May Marriage Referendum of 2015 in Ireland, she has said:

> ED: *I do like to think that my Irish-set fiction (and my own outness in interviews, especially about having children in a two-mother family) may have contributed to that Irish conversation in some small way, but to be honest, fiction is a pretty subtle and indirect way of changing the world, so I can't claim to be a great activist.*
> AP: *Subtle and indirect, yes – but a very important part of change, I think. Social scientists point to the impact of getting to know people who are different as a key part of overcoming differences in contact theory, and I see that happening through novels as well. There's a safe space in reading about a character for experiencing difference.*
> ED: *No, it does contribute, of course, but sometimes I envy people who make the world a better place in a more undeniable, hands-on way!* (Donoghue & Palko 2017)

When probed further about the reception of lesbian fiction in the mainstream, she has observed that there is growing acceptance of lesbian themes in literature among readers, publishers, and librarians. Even then, the pressure to write universally appealing stories is considerable, especially in contemporary fiction (Donoghue 2017). Emma Donoghue believes that literature is a potent medium to mainstream discourses about queer sexuality: "this is where I see the subversive potential of literature: the more novels there are out there that matter-of-factly feature a lesbian couple, the more mainstream it becomes" (ibid.). Donoghue's novels *Stir-Fry*, *Hood,* and *Landing* deal with issues of coming out and the possibility of gay marriage more explicitly. *Kissing the Witch* being a collection of fairy tales, a very formulaic genre, deals with these issues more subtly. As Donoghue has stated on her website, she revisioned the fairy tales metaphorically. Her revisioning of classic fairy tales and nuanced exploration of relationships between women may be considered activist as it brings about a dialogue about non-normative desires in the mainstream.

QUEERING THE CATEGORIES BEAUTY/BEAST IN DISNEY'S *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST* (2017)

Jean Cocteau's Queer Legacy

The earliest cinematic adaptation of Madame Beaumont's tale is Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* (1946), which has significantly influenced most of the later adaptations of the tale. As Cynthia Erb has observed, Cocteau's film has a subtle and symbolic homoerotic dimension which has been carried forward in the Disney animated film (Erb 1995: 53). When Cocteau appropriated Madame Beaumont's text, he changed the focus from Belle's story to male perspective and male desire which take the centre stage. He triangulated the romance between Belle and the Beast by introducing Avenant, Belle's village suitor and the Beast's rival. The actor Jean Marais played the key roles of the Beast/prince and Avenant, thus creating a strong doubling pattern. The issue of beauty becomes a male issue centred around displaying the body of Jean Marais or hiding it with a bestial mask. This emphasis on the male body becomes most prominent near the end of the film when the Beast is transformed into the human prince looking exactly like Avenant (both Jean Marais), while Avenant simultaneously changes into the Beast before dying when he is shot with an arrow by Diana. According to Cynthia Erb, "this visual technique guarantees that the real drama lies in the exchange of bestial masks between the two male principals: the Beast becomes the Prince, and Avenant becomes the Beast, just before plunging to his death" (1995: 54). This was a deliberate step taken by Jean Cocteau for both Belle and the audience to associate the transformed Beast with Avenant. This made the audience regret the transformation as Cocteau created the illusion that the hideous-looking but courteous Beast had been replaced with the handsome but boorish Avenant. The relationship between the Beast and the hunter Avenant is one of rivalry, which depends on the exchange of women – corresponding to Eve Sedgewick's pattern of homosocial bonding (ibid.). This relationship dynamics is carried forward in the 1991 Disney animated film and the later 2017 musical.

Unlike Cocteau's film, Disney portrayed sharply polarized and distinct kinds of masculinity through the different male characters, such as the Beast, Gaston, Gaston's sidekick Le Fou, and Beauty's father. Differing from Beaumont's tale and Cocteau's film, Beauty's father in the Disney animated film (1991) is a blundering, eccentric, and somewhat ineffective comic figure. Beauty's village suitor Gaston is a stereotypical blustering muscular alpha male caricature without any cultural refinement. The Beast is his polarized opposite – externally an animal but well-read and culturally refined. His only shortcoming appears to

be his quick temper and unpolished manners. These two characters are also poles apart in terms of social classes: while Gaston is a village bumpkin from the middle class, the Beast is a wealthy aristocrat with many servants. Jean Cocteau's film plays into Madame Beaumont's theme of not being deceived by appearances as it attempts to trick the audience by creating the illusion that Belle finally chooses to settle for Avenant and the Beast is left dead. Diverting from this, the Disney animated film represents changing ideals of masculinity through the different male characters. In her analysis of masculinity in the Disney animated film of 1971, Susan Jeffords has commented that Gaston is the "hypermasculine muscle-bound male" (1995: 170) who intimidates others, while the Beast is a progressive self-sacrificing male. But this transformation depends on the young women and the audience who must look beyond appearances.

The 2017 Disney version

When the Disney animated film was recreated as a live action musical in 2017, the plot was left intact, with only minor changes. In their article "King of Swingers: Queering Disney", Eleanor Byrne and Martin McQuillan have analysed the subtleties of the representation of queer desire in Disney films. They have stated that the LGBTQ characters in Disney films are passive voyeurs and remain peripheral in the cinematic narrative like the gargoyles in *The Wizard of Oz* (Byrne & McQuillan 1999:136). In other Disney films like *Aladdin* (1992) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), there is a potentially erotic dynamic between male characters Aladdin and Jafar and Gaston and the Beast. But they are obscured by the centrality of the heroine in the narrative and the male characters' pursuit of these heroines. The relationship between the male characters is portrayed as a homosocial one, consisting of male friendship, entitlement, and rivalry. This homosocial desire structures Disney's representation of heteropatriarchal normativity (Byrne & McQuillan 1999: 137). Eleanor Byrne and Martin McQuillan have interpreted this relationship model as a phallocentric one, wherein explicit homosexuality and women are excluded (1999: 136–137). This pattern of male homosocial bonding acts as a smokescreen which also sidetracks the deeper exploration of the relationship between the male characters in the Disney live action musical *Beauty and the Beast* (2017).

At the outset there is a scene in the film where Gaston and LeFou are hunting, and LeFou says that he and Gaston are content in their present state. He does not understand why Gaston wants to court Belle who is very different from him in terms of temperament, accomplishment, and interests:

> Gaston*: Look at her, LeFou – my future wife. Belle is the most beautiful girl in the village. That makes her the best.*
> LeFou*: But she's so well-read. And you're so athletically inclined.*
> Gaston*: I know. Belle can be as argumentative as she is beautiful.*
> LeFou*: Exactly. Who needs her when you've got us?*
> Gaston*: Yes. Ever since the war, I've felt like I've been missing something. She's the only girl who gives me the sense of…*
> LeFou*: Mmm, je ne sais quoi?*
> (Beauty and the Beast 2017)

Throughout the film LeFou faithfully devotes himself to Gaston as the latter stalks Belle. Gaston pursues the ideal of the heteronormative marriage with Belle as the stereotypical wife. He envisions Belle as a homespun conventional wife restricted to cooking, cleaning, bearing his children and serving him. His single-minded pursuit of this ideal continues from the beginning of the film till the end in spite of being rejected and humiliated by Belle multiple times, until he is finally killed by the Beast. At the same time, LeFou continues to function as Gaston's faithful sidekick, building up and supporting him through the entire length of the film, until Gaston abandons him. Mirroring the predatory nature of this relationship, LeFou enacts the role of Gaston's prey during a song and dance sequence at the pub. He displays how he has been bitten by Gaston, exclaiming: "In a wrestling match nobody bites like Gaston!" He dances with Gaston, taking up a feminine posture. Gaston asks him: "LeFou, you're the best. How is it that no girl has snatched you up yet?", and LeFou answers, "I've been told that I am clingy, but I really don't get it." The interaction has been interpreted as "subtle flirtation" by reviewer Nick Romano. In an interview to *Attitude* magazine, the film director Bill Condon claimed that LeFou would be coming out of the closet. In interviews he said, "LeFou is somebody who on one day wants to be Gaston and on another day wants to kiss Gaston. He's confused about what he wants. It's somebody who's just realizing that he has these feelings" (Romano 2017). Contrary to this interpretation, in an interview to *USA Today*, actor Josh Gad who enacted the role of LeFou, said: "There was nothing in the script that said 'LeFou is gay'." Actor Luke Evans, playing Gaston, has construed the relationship between the characters as friendship: "I think LeFou looks up to Gaston in that way – as a hero. I certainly don't think there was anything more outside that relationship. They're just good friends" (Ivie 2017). The publicity about a gay character in a Disney movie was enough to convince some theatres like Alabama-based Henagar Drive-in to decide not to screen it (Brown 2017). Similarly, the film has faced hurdles in Russia and Indonesia because of its supposed "gay" moment (The Telegraph 2017). Perhaps

this kind of controversy has caused the director to comment that too much has been made about the gay moment and the other actors have also chosen to be subtle about it. The marketing and publicity of the film focussed on the love story of Beauty and the Beast through posters, interviews, etc., in order to project it as a family film. Correspondingly, the plot arch of Beauty, the Beast, and Gaston has been foregrounded in the cinematic narrative. The story arc about LeFou's relationship with Gaston remains a subplot of male homosocial bonding. It serves to highlight the primacy of the heteronormative courtship as Gaston and LeFou bond over romantic pursuit of women. This continues the pattern of relegating potentially queer characters and relationships to the margin like in the previous Disney films.

In their analysis of queer elements in the Disney animated film *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), Eleanor Byrne and Martin McQuillan have categorized Belle as a gay diva (1999: 141). She is a misfit in the local culture and referred to as "different from us all", a "different but a funny girl". They have observed that Belle breaks taboos for women by reading fairy tales, "narratives in which coded explorations of sexual taboos and desires are embedded" (ibid.: 141–142). Taking the Freudian paradigm of desire based on the schema of heterosexual monogamous family, they have interpreted Belle as a lesbian (ibid.: 142). Like Freud's prototypical 'lesbian' who is a beautiful and clever girl who does not have an interest in men, Belle spurns the attention showered on her by her village suitor Gaston. Eleanor Byrne and Martin McQuillan have reasoned that Belle substitutes herself in her father's position as the Beast's prisoner like Freud's lesbian who substitutes herself for her father and loves her mother. In their scheme, this demonstrates the threatening potential of lesbian desire to undermine the institution of heterosexual family as Gaston tries to incarcerate Belle's father in a mental asylum. It also threatens Gaston's privileged position in the town (ibid.). This interpretation of Belle as a lesbian or gay diva could be a farfetched one. However, Belle is definitely a queer icon in the film, who questions and transgresses a conventional feminine gender role in society by advocating education for women. This is emphasized even more in the Disney live action musical in which Belle helps her father to make scientific instruments and builds and uses mechanical contraptions to wash clothes.

When Gaston refers to the Beast as a monster, Beauty counters him by replying that Gaston is the monster. Eleanor Byrne and Martin McQuillan have interpreted this to imply that "there might be something queer about being straight" (1999: 142). Both have also observed how the Beast remains an undecidable sexual object although he has been introduced to the audience as the prince and the master of the castle (ibid.: 142–143). This raises the possibility of a queer friendly narrative. The transformation of the Beast into human

form at the end of the film restores order through unambiguous heterosexual closure. Barbara Mennel has recounted that film scholar Harry Benshoff has traced the development of the monster as a queer figure through his analysis of the vampire:

> *… Benshoff emphasises the 'subtextual and connotative avenues' created by implicit and explicit prohibitions to portray homosexuality as a 'love that dare not speak its name', which thus becomes the 'shadowy Other' of 'normative heterosexuality' (1997: 14, 15). … To those who do not feel they have a place in wholesome heterosexuality, the film* [Nosferatu] *offers a belonging to an undefined queerness.* (Mennel 2012: 24–25)

Disney's live action musical *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) continues this tradition of the queer as monstrous through the portrayal of the Beast.

Before the emergence of New Queer Cinema,[8] mainstream post-World-War-II Hollywood films relied on camp[9] and veiled subtexts to represent queer aesthetic practices (Mennel 2012: 1). This was before positive gay and lesbian characters became more common in films. This strategy was adapted due to prohibition on the words 'gay' and 'lesbian' explicitly in mainstream films. As Barbara Mennel has observed, "Outrageous performances broke bourgeoisie taboos, tested boundaries of taste and constituted a queer aesthetic" (2012: 48). Similarly, cross-dressing, camp, and implicit subtexts have been used for representing the queer in films meant for children. The portrayal of Ursula in *The Little Mermaid* is an example of camp in Disney films. Based on the real-life drag queen Divine, she represents queer aesthetic through a theatrical performance of hyper femininity through elaborate grooming and exaggerated makeup. Camp has been perceived as a queer practice that enables the subversion of definite gender norms through performance (Butler 1990: 233–234). However, as Kerry Malla and Roderick McGillis remark (2005: 6), when camp is used for comedic purposes in children's culture, it loses its subversive potential. It becomes a strategy used by filmmakers for marketing purposes. The process of commodification and appropriation by the mainstream destroys the political and subversive potential of camp (ibid.).

In Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, when LeFou dances with Gaston, his exaggerated mannerisms, submissive stance and parading of bite marks draws attention to his masculinity through the performance of stereotypical femininity. This sequence subtly suggests homoerotic dynamic between Gaston and LeFou. During the storming of the Beast's castle, Stanley and his cohorts are dressed up by the animated closet. Stanley is dressed in feminine clothes and appears to be pleased rather than embarrassed. This differs from the earlier

animated film version of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, in which the cross-dressed characters are so embarrassed that they scream and run out. Near the end of the film, when many couples are dancing, LeFou is seen dancing with Stanley for a few seconds. The cross-dressing sequence only lasts for a few minutes, but it is a significant departure from the earlier animated film version. The performance of feminine gender norms by the masculine characters is representative of greater openness about the non-normative sexuality and gender. At the same time these elements function on the level of innuendo and veiled symbolism, producing distinctive meanings for different sections of the audience like contemporary new queer cartoons.[10] While this is a reflection of greater openness about non-normative forms of desire during contemporary times, it serves to recreate the binary of the heteronormative mainstream and the peripheral queer narrative typical of Disney films. This has been labelled as the "queer closet" of Disney and other children's films which serve to reproduce the societal dynamics of the "closet" in the cinematic representation.

The Drag Ball subculture in the 1980s' New York was a form of asserting one's queer identity (Paris is Burning 1991*)*. It provided the queer community with an alternative family which was non-judgemental and would accept their sexual orientation. To them, entering the ball circuit was like "crossing into the looking glass, entering wonderland – you enter and you feel 100 percent right being gay" (ibid.). These balls also provided the opportunity for youngsters to find established mentors to fill the void left by broken families, absent parents, and parents who did not accept that they were gay (ibid.). During the few minutes in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), when Stanley dances with LeFou at the ball, the cross-dressing gives a glimpse of the intrusion of queer subculture in the dominant heteropatriarchal narrative. This sequence has multiple layers of meanings which speak to different sections of the audience. Those familiar with the gay subculture and the ball circuit will recognize the activist stance of the scene in challenging the mainstream heteronormative culture. To others it will be a sequence of drag, cross-dressing, and gender role reversal. The exaggerated makeup and elaborate costume of drag direct the attention of the audience towards artificiality of gender roles and question masculine and feminine gender norms. Thus, the Disney adaptation questions hegemonic heteropatriarchal narratives and performs the function of adaptation as a form of activism even as it marginalizes the queer elements in the narrative.

CONCLUSION

"Beauty and the Beast" has proved to be a resilient and popular tale which evolved with time while proliferating through multiple media. Both Donoghue's adaptation of this tale and the Disney musical engage in hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses about cultural constructions of gender. When Donoghue adapted the classic story of "Beauty and the Beast" in the form of a literary tale, she was conscious of being a part of the tradition of feminist revisioning of fairy tales by woman writers of the 1980s and 1990s. The uncertainty about the demography of the target audience, the role of the publishing house which decided to market the book under the YA category, and the beginnings of discourse about LGBTQ rights have influenced her subtle representation of lesbian relationships. In the case of the Disney musical released twenty years later, greater acceptance of gender diversity, mainstreaming of discourses about LGBTQ activism, and the musical as a genre were instrumental in the representation of queer elements in the film. At the same time, controversies about the alleged 'gay moment', obstacles in distribution, and screening of the film due to this controversy, its influence on the marketing and publicity, and expectations of a stereotypically conventional family film have had a hand in the marginalization of the queer elements in the film. Nevertheless, both the adaptations have proved to be popular and have generated debates about non-normative gender, sexuality, and desire.[11]

NOTES

[1] In the Grimm Brothers' "Rapunzel", an ogress keeps the eponymous heroine captive in a tower and banishes her to a deserted land after coming to know that she has been meeting a prince. Later when the prince climbs into the tower and finds that Rapunzel is not there, he jumps off and ruins his sight but reunites with her later. She has given birth to twins by that time (Brothers Grimm 2003). In Anne Sexton's revisionist version, the heroine and Mother Gothel engage in sexual relations until Rapunzel meets the prince after which the tale follows the same trajectory. Here Rapunzel "outgrows" same-sex relations and embraces a normative heterosexual relation (Sexton 2001: 35–42).

[2] The tale of Beauty and the Beast was shaped by both the oral tradition of folktales about animal bridegrooms and written versions.

[3] This was translated into German and published in 1758 under the title *Der Frau Maria le Prince de Beaumont Lehren der Tugend und Weisheit für die Jugend: Aus dem französischen übersetzt. Mit einer Vorrede des Herrn Consistorialrath Rambachs*. Three years later the English version was published in the *Young Misses Magazine* in 1761 (Zipes 2006). From then on, it became the key model for most of the "Beauty and the Beast" adaptations in the Western world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* (1946) and Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (1990).

[4] When Madame Beaumont adapted Madame Villeneuve's tale, she removed elements not directly related to the main plot like Beauty's entertainments in the Beast's castle and the ancestry of both the Beast and Beauty. She simplified the structure by eliminating the frame narrative of Beauty's dream and abridged Madame Villeneuve's tale of 341 pages to twenty-five pages (Barchilon 1959: 19–29).

[5] Donoghue has noted how same-sex desire between women has a long history of being represented as monstrous (Donoghue 2010: 115). When reimagined by Donoghue in terms of the fairy tale of "Beauty and the Beast", the negative representation is supplanted with the happy ending of popular romance narratives.

[6] Angela Carter's retelling of the tale of Snow White in "The Snow Child" develops this further by representing the female protagonist as a passive pornographic object created only for sexual exploitation by the male protagonist (Carter 2006: 105).

[7] Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* (1946) is the earliest cinematic adaptation of Madame Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast".

[8] The term New Queer Cinema was coined by B. Ruby Rich in the *Sight and Sound* magazine in 1992. The chief characteristics of New Queer Cinema are "a flagrant disregard for and defiance of norms, conventions and rules and an unapologetic attitude towards representing the complexity of queer lives" (Giffney & O'Rourke 2016: 366).

[9] Camp is a distinct aesthetic sensibility characterized by the love of the unnatural, exaggeration, and artifice. It converts the serious into the frivolous (Sontag 2018 [1964]: 1).

[10] In her article "The New Queer Cartoon", Noreen Giffney has observed how the cartoon as a popular cultural medium has been used to propagate heteronormativity (Giffney & O'Rourke 2016: 368). She has noted how New Queer Cartoons challenge this in subtle ways: "New Queer Cartoons expose cultural scripts for the constructions they are, subverting them by directly referencing norms governing sexuality and gender, and are littered with sexual innuendo and jokes about gender. They are often aimed more at adults than children so that there are multiple narratives operating simultaneously and in layers" (Giffney & O'Rourke 2016: 367).

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Priyanka Banerjee is currently a Junior Research Fellow at the Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad, India. She did her MPhil at Jadavpur University. Her areas of specialization are fairy tales, adaptation studies, women's studies, literary theory, and cultural studies.

pkb2912@gmail.com

Rajni Singh is Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad, India. She completed her PhD at Banaras Hindu University, India. She has contributed many articles to reputed journals as well as published books of literary merit. Her areas of specialization are Victorian and modern poetry, feminist studies, Indian English literature, postcolonial literature, and ELT.

rajnisingh18@gmail.com

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WOMEN OF THE TWILIGHT: THE NARRATIVE SPACES OF WOMEN IN THE ICELANDIC RURAL COMMUNITY OF THE PAST

Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir
Adjunct in Folkloristics
Department of Folkloristics, University of Iceland
jthm2@hi.is

Abstract: The article deals with some of the spatial features of women's storytelling traditions in rural Iceland in the late nineteenth century and early 1900s. The study is based on audiotaped sources collected by folklore collector Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson in the 1960s and 1970s from informants born in rural Iceland in the later part of the nineteenth century. The main focus of the article is on 200 women that figure in these sources and their legend repertoires, although a small sample group of 25 men and their repertoires will also be examined to allow comparison. The article discusses what these sources tell us about women's mobility and the social spaces they inhabited in the past. It goes on to consider the performance space of the Icelandic turf farm in which women's storytelling took place from the perspective of gender. After noting how the men and women in the sources incorporated different kinds of spaces into their legends, it takes a closer look at how the spatial components of legends told by the women reflect their living spaces, experiences, and spheres of activity. The article underlines that while women in the Icelandic rural community were largely confined to the domestic space of the farm (something reflected in the legends they told), they were neither socially isolated nor immobile. They also evidently played an important part in oral storytelling in their communities, often acting as the dominant storytellers in the performance space of the old turf farm.

Keywords: legends, narratives, performance, space, storytelling, the rural community of the past, women

In recent years, folklorists interested in folk narratives have started to find their way back to the folk narrative archives relating to the rural past, reviewing them with new approaches and methods in mind (see, e.g., Gunnell 2016, 2018; Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir[1] 2011; Skott 2008; Tangherlini 1994, 2013). These same folk narrative archives were largely abandoned by most folklorists in the latter half of the twentieth century in line with the new approaches in folkloristics

which placed more value on the living performance event and fieldwork rather than archived texts, and on urbanised contemporary communities rather than on the rural communities of the past (see Gunnell et al. 2013). The general assumption was that the material contained in the archives represented "dead" text that had been collected as part of the faulty fieldwork efforts of the past, and that the apparent lack of contextual material made interpretation both questionable and unfeasible (Dégh 2001: 25; Honko 1989: 33). As I have argued elsewhere (Júlíana Þóra Magnúsdóttir 2018), and will demonstrate in the following article, the folk narrative archives in question nonetheless represent vital sources that can still be used for a variety of purposes, and not least as part of the reconstruction of certain aspects of narrative tradition that were given comparatively little consideration in previous scholarship such as questions regarding gender and gender-roles and their influence on the formation and performance of women's narrative repertoires and narrative "spaces" that they reflect.

One aspect of this marginalisation of gender in earlier scholarship is the implicit assumption that rural women in the past were socially isolated, firmly rooted in the private domestic spaces of their homes, which may have led to their being assigned a secondary status in certain oral storytelling traditions. In Iceland at least, the oral archive materials demonstrate that this notion is oversimplified, not least with regard to women's geographical mobility in the past and the domestic space they inhabited on the farm. In Iceland, this domestic space was evidently a place where the private and the public effectively merged. It was also the centre of cultural production.

The key sources of my discussion will be the folk narrative repertoires of 200 Icelandic women born in the last decades of the nineteenth century, who were interviewed and recorded on tape by folklore collector Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson (1933–2005) in the 1960s and the 1970s. This material now forms part of the Folklore Audio Collection of the Árni Magnússon Institute in Icelandic Studies.[2] This source material, which has its roots in the pre-industrial rural community of the Icelandic turf farm, includes not only oral narratives, but also a wide range of information regarding both the wider social context of women's storytelling in the past and the performance context in which their storytelling took place. As the focus of Hallfreður Örn's collecting efforts was predominantly on narrators born during the nineteenth century, his material effectively overlaps in time with that found in the written folk narrative archives (from the mid-nineteenth century onwards). His work thus provides valuable opportunities to fill in some layers of context that are often missing in the written collections.

In this article I will, among other things, make some comparisons between the roles played by men and women as narrators on the Icelandic farms, as well as demonstrate some of the key differences that existed with regard to the performance contexts surrounding their performances. The article will start by considering the wider geographical space of Iceland and women's mobility within it, considering the roles of women as storytellers and the formation of their repertoires. The second part of the article will then deal with the actual performance space on the turf farm and differences that existed between men's and women's narrative performances. The last part will consider the narrative spaces reflected in the legends[3] told by the women compared with those found in men's narratives, demonstrating how women evidently incorporated their living spaces and experiences into their narratives.

THE WIDER GEOGRAPHICAL SPACE: WOMEN IN ICELAND

In Iceland, the pre-industrial rural community was largely characterized by a lack of infrastructure, unpredictable nature, dispersed settlements and an absence of what has become known in modernity as public spaces. Until the early 1900s, the farm was the centre of both social organization and cultural production and to a large extent a self-sufficient economic unit. The farm's social organization was thus not only shaped by socially constructed gender roles and norms, but also by particularly harsh environmental conditions that placed restrictions on social interactions outside the realm of the farm for most of its inhabitants and for women in particular. In this community, men were almost exclusively responsible for managing the external affairs of the farm and undertaking seasonal travels, like those relating to fishing and commerce. The general confinement of women to the domestic space of the farm raises some important questions about their key role in the transmission of oral narratives in Iceland. Did the more limited mobility of women in the past mean that they played a lesser part in the migration of oral stories?

It is important to first address the common assumption that in the past women did not generally travel between communities as much as men in Iceland. This argument needs some refining. Until the early 1900s, so-called *orlofskonur* (holiday women) were common guests on Icelandic farms during the autumn, just before the cold winter set in. These were predominantly older women who had limited household responsibilities or had passed them on to younger women in their households, leaving themselves with spare time to travel and socialize with relatives, friends, neighbours, and their former masters. Many of these women belonged to the lower economic strata and this led to some

people viewing their visits as thinly-disguised begging trips, since according to custom, the housewife on the host farm was expected to reward a guest with generous parting gifts (Jónas Jónasson 2010: 249–251). Understandably, as the tradition of *orlofsferðir* (holiday journey) gradually came to an end in the early 1900s, none of Hallfreður Örn's female informants were active participants in this custom. *Orlofskonur* nonetheless evidently played a prominent role in the storytelling tradition if we trust women's accounts of storytelling in their childhood and their narratives about gifted storytellers and their storytelling sessions, some of which even imply that storytelling was the primary purpose of the women's visits.[4] A good example of this can be seen in the following account told by Ástríður Thorarensen (1895–1985) about the storytelling of a woman called Guðrún, who visited her childhood home every fall in the early 1900s:

> *I came to Breiðabólsstaðir in 1900. And she came every autumn and told stories. Naturally mainly to the children, but everyone listened, everyone who wanted to hear, because they enjoyed listening to her telling them. And this went on for many years. She died in 1911 and did it right up to that point in time, I think she came last in 1910. She told us the same stories. Naturally we asked for them.*
>
> *You wanted to hear this one or that one, and there were some stories that were told more often than others … "Kisa kóngsdóttir"* [Kisa, the King's Daughter] *and "Þorsteinn glott"* [Smirking Þorsteinn] *and "Hnoðri"* [Wispy]*, and "Álagaflekkur"* [Enchanted-Spotty] *and "Rautt hnoð"* [Red Ball] … [On supernatural legends:] *I never heard her tell such stories … She sat and talked with the householders, and then various things came up, of course, various kinds of information as tends to happen. They talked about people and things, and then of course there would be some verses and this and that, as usual, as part of a conversation*.[5] (SÁM 89/1793).

The prominent appearance of such *orlofskonur* in narratives about storytelling not only underlines that some women did indeed travel in Iceland's rural past, but also the degree to which women played an active role in the distribution of narratives between communities. In a sense, these women can be regarded as having been *professional* storytellers in pre-industrial rural Iceland, since they cultivated their storytelling skills as a means of gaining both economic and social capital.

The second feature worth considering here is the effect of women's permanent migration between communities on the transmission of oral narratives. The cultural influence on the oral tradition of people moving to different parts of Iceland as a result of marriage or work has rarely been addressed by scholars

dealing with similarities in narratives within the tradition or the geographical scope of migratory legends in Iceland. Most scholars have tended to explain such similarities with reference to the traditional seasonal work-related travels back and forth across the country by fishermen and other seasonal workers and to the recurrent journeys undertaken by men to trading centres (Almqvist 2008: 314; Gunnell 2002: 205; 2004: 61; Trausti Dagsson 2014: 7–8). Discussions of this kind usually focus on the world of male experience and seasonal male mobility, leaving unanswered questions like those relating to the role of men in the transmission of Icelandic migratory legends dealing with women's experiences, their points of views and their social roles.[6] It would arguably be more logical for such stories to be attributed to women, and for their movement from one community to another to be the result of women moving between communities for marriage or work. While such a migration of women might have been less regular, it was nonetheless a common feature of the Icelandic rural community, partly because deep-seated patriarchal traditions up into the twentieth century tended to prioritise the male inheritance of farmland, something that led to men rather than women remaining in the communities of their youth after marriage, often taking a spouse from another community (Hjördís Sigursteinsdóttir & Guðbjörg Linda Rafnsdóttir 2009: 33–39). In short, while men may have *travelled* on average more than women in their everyday lives, women were arguably more prone to move their long-term residence to new communities, naturally taking their legend repertoires with them.

Table 1. *The number of women storytellers classified on the basis of the size of their repertoires and residential history.*

Repertoire size (number of legends told)	All women	Women remaining in childhood regions	Women settled in new regions
1–9	128	76	52
10–19	47	23	24
20–29	13	6	7
30+	12	3	9
Total number of women	200	108	92

The biographies of the 200 female legend tellers that lie behind this study provide a valuable insight into the scale of the long-term movement of women in the late nineteenth century and early 1900s, as well as the influence that this might have had on women's legend repertoires. As can be seen above, close to half of these women (92 of 200, see Table 1)[7] migrated in adulthood away from

the region they grew up in, many settling down in their husbands' childhood communities. Some of these women even undertook frequent movement between communities (see Table 2), in some cases moving long distances, meaning that they experienced ways of life in very different parts of Iceland. The effects of women moving their place of residence on the size of their legend repertoires become particularly evident if we compare the repertoires of the women who moved to different parts with those of the women who lived most of their adult lives within the regions in which they grew up. While the former group constitutes only 46% of the overall total of 200 women storytellers in the sources, they make up more than half of the number of more active legend tellers who tell 10–19 and 20–29 legends (see Table 1) and 75% of those exceptional legend tellers telling 30 legends or more. This underlines the strong correlation between the geographical residential changes undertaken by women and the size of their repertoires.

Table 2. *The number of moves undertaken by the 92 women who settled outside their childhood regions as adults examined in relation to the size of their repertoires.*

Number of women	Number of moves between regions	Average number of stories in repertoires
21	1	10.9
28	2	11.1
18	3	12.8
12	4	15.5
9	5	16.9
2	6	9.5
1	7	21.0
1	8	34.0

A good example of an active legend teller who experienced life in many different communities in Iceland is Geirlaug Filippusdóttir (1876–1970), who told a total of 21 legends in her interviews (SÁM 86/826-32; 86/847-48). Geirlaug left her home farm in Fljótshverfi in southeast Iceland at the age of nine to work for two years as a babysitter at her uncle's farm in Hornafjörður, about 150 kilometres east of her childhood home. At the age of 16, she then left her family in Fljótshverfi again to become a maid at the local sheriff's household some 30 kilometres away. Four years later, she moved about 200 kilometres east, and became a farmhand on a farm close to Hornafjörður in the east of Iceland where she lived until the year 1900 (the age of 24). By that time, her family had also moved across the country to settle down on a new farm in Borgarfjörður Eystri,

more than 400 kilometres east of their old home in Fljótshverfi. After briefly joining her family there in 1900, Geirlaug went on to become a farmhand in the neighbouring fjord, Seyðisfjörður, where she worked as farmhand until 1904. At that point in time, she married a farmer's son from Breiðdalur in eastern Iceland, this time moving some 100 kilometres back south in order to settle down on her husband's childhood farm. After becoming a widow in 1924, at the age of 48, she moved once again, this time travelling about 600 kilometres southwest to the growing capital of Iceland, Reykjavík, where she lived for the rest of her life (Björn Magnússon 1970: 307).

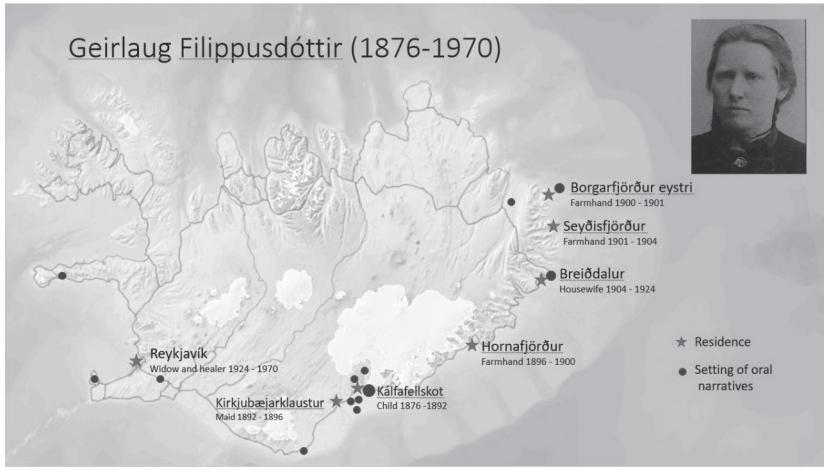

Figure 1. *The residence of Geirlaug Filippusdóttir and the setting of her oral narratives.*

As can be seen from the above, there is little question about Geirlaug's geographical mobility, even though she would have been largely confined to the domestic space of the farm in each of her successive roles as a female farmhand and later as a housewife. It is also worth bearing in mind that since she lived for relatively long periods of time in each of her new communities, rather than just visiting them briefly as a traveller, she was in a particularly good position to become an active participant in the local legend tradition, constantly gaining new interested audiences for her repertoire and new opportunities for expanding this repertoire as she adopted narratives and traditional ideas from each of her new communities. While Geirlaug predominantly tells first- and second-hand memorates about her own experiences and those of her family, drawing on the localized supernatural traditions surrounding the various homes she lived in

during her lifetime, she also appears to have incorporated some narratives into her repertoire that originated with non-related people she came across during her frequent movement between communities. These include the story of an elf woman, which she heard from the sheriff she worked for in Kirkjubæjarklaustur; stories of the murderer Axlar-Björn, which she heard from old women in Hornafjörður when she was working as a babysitter there; and a story of the Lagarfljót serpent, which she heard from a woman who stayed at her home in Breiðdalur.

While the women's residential histories are an important key to understanding their role in the storytelling traditions of the past and in the transmission of narratives from one area to another, they do not always say much about exactly *where* these women told their stories or from *whom* they learned their legends. The recordings nonetheless often provide some important clues about such things since Hallfreður Örn frequently asked his informants about the previous narrators of the legends they told him. With regard to the roughly 2200 legends told by his 200 female informants, about 730 are accompanied by important contextual information of this kind. About 65% of the previous narrators are family members, and most often the women's mothers.[8] Non-related members of the household are then cited as the sources of about 10% of these legends,[9] underlining the fact that Icelandic rural households in the past were rarely strictly *private* spaces inhabited by the family alone. All the same, the fact that a total of 75% originated with household members underlines the degree to which Icelandic households were the primary platform for storytelling in the past.

Nonetheless, the fact that the women appear to attribute the other c. 25% of those legends to friends and neighbours from outside the household underlines that despite their general confinement to the domestic space of the farms, these women must have had at least some social networks that extended beyond their households. In this regard it might be born in mind that farms (and especially the living room on the farm) were in most cases the *only* available places for any small or large social gathering to take place (not least storytelling), until special community houses started to appear in rural Iceland in the 1910s–1920s (on Icelandic community houses see Jón M. Ívarsson 2007: 70–73; Loftur Guttormsson 2008: 60–61.) During the winter season, it was the *baðstofa* (living room) that tended to be the scene of traditional cultural work-related events, such as the so-called *kvöldvökur* (lit. evening wakes; sing. *kvöldvaka*) (Magnús Gíslason 1977) which, along with the activities of the so-called *rökkrin* (lit. the twilight gathering, referring to the period in the evening before the *kvöldvökur* took place) was the primary context for both Icelandic oral storytelling and other cultural practices.

Figure 2. *An Icelandic turf farm in the early 1900s. Photograph courtesy of the National Museum of Iceland.*

WINTER-NIGHT STORYTELLING IN THE *BAÐSTOFA*

Storytelling traditions in the *baðstofa* were to a large extent shaped by two key factors. The first one was associated with the social organization of the community that had a natural influence on participation in the different cultural practices that took place on the farm. The second factor was related to the nature of the *baðstofa* space itself, which not only determined which forms of cultural entertainment could be performed at any one time but also the ways in which it was received and experienced by the audiences. Together these features provide the performance context of the storytelling, something to which Hallfreður Örn paid particular attention in the material that he collected, which sheds valuable light on the place and role of women in these events. As I will show below, cultural performances in the winter nights in the *baðstofa* had two distinct and different settings that distinguished themselves on the basis of the gender of those involved and the fact that they had quite a different atmosphere.

Icelandic archaeology and ethnography provide an abundance of contextual information not only about what the *baðstofa* would have looked like in the

past, but also on its function and on its historical development throughout the centuries. In short, the Icelandic turf farm involved a cluster of interconnected houses built from turf, stones, and wood, which were connected by a long tunnel that started at the front door and usually ended at the heart of the farm, the so-called *baðstofa*, the communal living room where most residents both worked and slept (Anna Lísa Rúnarsdóttir 2007; Hjörleifur Stefánsson 2013; Guðmundur Ólafsson & Hörður Ágústsson 2004; Boucher 1989: 43, 59–60, 119–120, 181). From the early 1900s and onwards, these turf farms were increasingly replaced by more modern houses built of timber and, later, concrete, first of all in the newly emerging fishing villages but later on also in the rural countryside. In 1910, around 52% of all Icelandic houses were turf houses (around 74% in rural areas), but in 1940, the number of such houses had been reduced to around 11% of all Icelandic houses (23% in rural areas) (Guðmundur Jónsson & Magnús S. Magnússon 1997: 3003–3011). The multi-bedroom houses that replaced the turf farm naturally transformed people's perception of space, access to privacy, and people's interaction on a daily basis, making this change in architecture a fundamental factor in the cultural transformation that took place in Iceland in the twentieth century.

Figure 3. *Baðstofa at Glaumbær in Skagafjörður. Photograph by Guðni Þórðarson, courtesy of the National Museum of Iceland.*

As suggested above, the *baðstofa* was not only a gender-mixed communal space in which families lived in close and intimate contact with non-related workers and guests but also a space in which home life and the workplace merged (especially in the wintertime). The multi-sided nature of this performance space makes it a particularly challenging and interesting place to explore, not only from the viewpoint of the physical surroundings of oral storytelling but also the gender dynamics involved. The cultural scene and atmosphere of the *baðstofa* would traditionally change depending on the season, the time of the day, and work rhythms of the household members. The winter season in particular had its own rhythm within the *baðstofa*, a tradition that was comparatively fixed and deep-rooted in the rural community of Iceland. Division of labour on many Icelandic farms during the winter was both conventional and seasonal, adult male household members traditionally looking after the sheep during the first part of the winter, and often leaving for the fishing season in January, which meant that on many farms the farm work was then left in the hands of the women until the spring (Gunnar Karlsson 2000: 106–110; Magnús Gíslason 1977: 47). The period from September until the men of the household left for the fishing stations in January was particularly important for cultural activity on the farm, with various forms of oral performances taking place during the *rökkrin* and later the *kvöldvaka*.

Sources suggest the setting that characterized the *rökkrin* offered particularly good opportunities for oral storytelling. The term *rökkur* refers not only to the time setting but also to a particular atmosphere in the *baðstofa* caused by the length of the Icelandic winter twilight and the fact that fuel for the lamp needed to be economized. This is the time of the day when the men came in from outside and when many adults used the opportunity to take a nap referred to as *rökkursvefn* (twilight sleep). During this time, low-key storytelling would often take place in one corner of the *baðstofa* for children, teenagers, and other household members who did not need the sleep (Magnús Gíslason 1977: 70–72, 149–150). This particular period of storytelling had a practical purpose: in bad weather, the children could not be sent outside to play but had to be kept calm and quiet while the adults slept (Magnús Gíslason 1977: 144; SÁM 86/888 (Sigríður Helgadóttir); SÁM 89/1717 (Helga Þorkelsdóttir Smára)). According to many of Hallfreður Örn's informants, this setting was the most common scene of oral storytelling on the turf farm, well over 50 accounts either making this claim or containing descriptions of such storytelling sessions.[10]

Over and above its practicality as a means for keeping children under control, another possible reason for why *rökkrin* might have become a preferred platform for oral storytelling is that the semi-darkness (like that in a theatre) provided a good means for the audience to transfer themselves mentally from

the immediate living space to that of the narrative. The darkness, the need for quiet and the sound of people sleeping would also have helped create a real or false sense of intimacy, confidentiality and community spirit or communitas (Schechner 2006: 70–71) among the storyteller and his or her intended audiences. The darkness naturally also provided storytellers with a degree of freedom from the visual gaze of audiences, which may have been helpful for modest or less self-confident narrators. One account by Ingibörg Tryggvadóttir (1904–1986) (SÁM 88/1546) is particularly interesting in this respect, as it describes how in her youth young people used to take part in meetings organized by the local youth movement in order to practise public speaking. She notes that a common practice during these sessions was for the light to be turned off to help those who felt shy and insecure when speaking.

Sources suggest women rather than men were the dominant storytellers during *rökkrin*. In Hallfreður Örn's sources, women, especially old women, are referred in this context nearly four times as often as men.[11] The logical explanation for this can be found in the traditional division of labour on the turf farm noted earlier, in which men, and in some cases younger women, tended to be responsible for physically challenging tasks and outdoor work and therefore had greater need for sleep at twilight. Further support for the strong role of women in these activities is found in the work of those scholars who have dealt with the Icelandic wonder tale tradition, such as Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (2003: 69) and Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir (2011: 66; 2015: 70–71), both of whom have shown that women had a much larger role in the preservation of this tradition than men in the late nineteenth century and early 1900s. This may well have been a result of their key role as the predominant entertainers during *rökkrin*.

Another aspect of the *baðstofa* storytelling revealed by Hallfreður's sources relates to exactly *what* was being told and to *whom*. It seems evident that the nature of the audience in the *baðstofa* during *rökkrin* had some influence on the genres chosen, as well as notions of what it was considered appropriate to tell. As noted above, the predominant audiences of *rökkursögur* (e. twilight stories) tended to be children and teenagers. Those informants who describe the *rökkrin* storytelling sessions note that, as might be expected, wonder tales were indeed common. However, they also mention that legends were told as well as retellings of stories in literature or others based on *rímur* poetry (a form of ballad, see Ragnheiður Ólafsdóttir 2008). Genre classification of the material is complicated by the fact that informants rarely use scholarly classifications for oral narratives, such as *ævintýri* (wonder tales) or *sagnir* (legends). Instead, they talk about "stories about kings and queens", "stories of ghosts and *huldufólk*" (hidden people),[12] or "stories of events in the past". If one connects such "ethnic classifications" to our modern scholarly genres, it is apparent

that in the accounts about *rökkursögur*, 23 contain clear references to wonder tales, and 30 to legends, while 14 just mention unclassifiable *sögur* (stories). Four mention stories based on books or *rímur* verses. One old woman in the childhood home of Sigríður Guðmundsdóttir (1893–1975) is said to have told folktales and stories "from her own life" and "from Ísafjarðardjúpur where she grew up" (SÁM 89/1812).

Some legend topics seem to have been more controversial than others. The grandmother of Helga Þorkelsdóttir (1884–1974) apparently told both wonder tales and legends of outlaws and *huldufólk* during *rökkrin*, but rarely ghost legends, since she did not want the children to become afraid of the dark (SÁM 89/1717). This attitude is reflected by a number of other informants[13] as well as in other sources on storytelling in the *baðstofa* (Magnús Gíslason 1977: 71). In spite of this, legends about ghosts seem to have been one of the most common features of storytelling during *rökkrin,* or at least among the most memorable ones. This topic is commonly cited in the accounts about these storytelling sessions, followed closely by legends dealing with the *huldufólk*.[14] Ghost legends evidently had a somewhat ambiguous status in the oral tradition of the turf farm (especially in the *rökkrin* sessions), something that is understandable considering the general living space and the atmosphere which would have amplified the emotional effect of ghost stories. As reflected in the following account about storytelling by Júlía Sigríður Guðmundsdóttir (1896–1982) in Hvítanesi in the early 1900s, the *baðstofa* surrounded by a maze of dark narrow corridors could become a fearful place during the twilight:

> *We became so afraid of the dark that my father and mother didn't want to tell us such stories, because then we didn´t dare leave the* baðstofa. *They were telling us these things, and we were sitting in our beds in the* baðstofa *with our feet up on the bed because we thought that this thing might come out from under the bed. It was a pity that grandmother died because she would have told us that sort of thing, sometimes in the* rökkrin. (SÁM 89/2048)

As noted above, it is evident that these storytelling sessions for children and teenagers were not the type of spontaneous and dynamic conversational storytelling event commonly associated with legend sharing but rather organized, conscious, time-bound performances that usually involved only one narrator and a particular designated space in the corner of the *baðstofa*. It is nonetheless also clear that other kinds of less structured storytelling sometimes took place in the *baðstofa* during the *rökkrin,* especially in those households where twilight sleeping was not practised. These sessions tended to be less gender-

specific in terms of narrators and also more skewed towards legends than wonder tales since the intended audiences involved adults rather than children. An account by Þorsteinn Guðmundsson (1895–1984) tells about such storytelling in a *baðstofa* in south-eastern Iceland in his youth, in which they "would sit there and remember old events and tell stories rather than have a nap" and his parents "asking each other … about things that happened in their youth" (SÁM 85/228).

The work-related session of *kvöldvaka* that followed on closely from *rökkrin*, also had an equally important role to play in the farm's cultural activity. If we compare the performances that took place in *rökkrin* with those that occurred during the *kvöldvaka* later in the evening, it is evident that the latter involved not only a completely different setting but also different genres, a different atmosphere, and a different gender of the performer. As noted by the Icelandic historian Guðmundur Hálfdanarson (2008: 116–117), the lighting of the kerosene lamp at the beginning of the *kvöldvaka* signalled the transformation of the *baðstofa* from a space which was broken up into separate spheres into one that represented an undivided communal space or workplace. Traditionally, one member of the household, situated under the lamp in the centre of the *baðstofa*, would be given the task of reading or performing in some other way during the *kvöldvaka* for the other members of the household who would be working with wool or be engaged in other tasks (Magnús Gíslason 1977: 88–90). Many of Hallfreður Örn's informants who consider the nature of the *kvöldvaka* note that it was more often men than women who now assumed the role of presenters, citing various reasons for this, such as the fact that work-related noise sometimes drowned out women's voices (SÁM 90/2341; 86/834; 89/1967, 90/2287) or that men were simply too tired to take on any further physical work during the *kvöldvaka* (SÁM 86/812).[15]

Two other features that distinguished the *kvöldvaka* from *rökkrin* were the actual mode of performance and the nature of the genres performed. While oral storytelling did occasionally take place during the working session, especially when guests were staying overnight, by far the most dominant form of entertainment involved reading books out loud, primarily the Old Icelandic sagas and the newly published Icelandic novels. Also popular in these performances was the chanting of the *rímur* poetry.[16] The atmosphere was also naturally different, shifting from the dark, mystical and supernatural atmosphere of the intimate *rökkrin* to the broader oil lighting and more secular, rational atmosphere of Icelandic literature and the *rímur* tradition.

It is thus evident that the storytelling platform of the *baðstofa* was coloured by both the physical nature of the room and of the gender-roles that existed on the farm. While the social organization of the turf farm appears to have

largely favoured women rather than men as oral storytellers, during the late nineteenth century and early 1900s, this role of storytelling seems to have been predominantly assigned to the semi-dark hours of *rökkrin*. Once the lamp was lit, however, it is evident that the *baðstofa* was transformed into a wholly public workplace that was essentially dominated by male performers and more literary traditions that emphasized rationality and enlightenment, in other words, largely profane genres of performance. Even here, within the shared performance space of the *baðstofa*, one thus witnesses the familiar pattern of women being relegated to performing in a more private space.

THE NARRATIVE SPACE

The third type of space worth considering in relation to women's legend-telling is the spaces reflected in the legends they tell. As underlined below, legends are not only told in space but also, to a large extent, incorporate the space(s) that were daily inhabited by their narrators. As has been shown by the British folklorist Terry Gunnell, both wonder tales and legends have the capability to transform space, albeit in a different manner. Legends, of course, tend to be closely bound up with the living spaces inhabited by narrators and their audiences. At the same time, Gunnell argues, they might be said to add new temporal depth, characters, and mystery to these surroundings, simultaneously offering guidelines for listeners on how to deal with these surroundings and the animate and inanimate threats they incorporate (Gunnell 2006: 13–15). Legends that are bound up with space familiar to both narrators and their audiences thus add layers of meaning and values to these spaces. In this sense, legends are an important tool in the making of "places", effectively transforming unmarked and unbound spaces into meaningful and familiar places (cf. Tuan 1977: 85–100) in the minds of their narrators and listeners. They also underline the fact that while local geography and physical spaces are essentially gender-neutral, people's experiences of them are not. While, as has been shown above, many Icelandic women were certainly mobile (albeit in a way different from men), and while the domestic space of the farm was the dominant place of economic and cultural production for both men and women, the traditional division of labour on gender lines meant that both men and women would naturally have had different experiences of the various social spaces, both on the farm and in its wider surroundings.

One of the biggest weaknesses of folk narratives being published as part of "national" collections, often as a result of the earlier forces of romantic nationalism, is that their original, very real connection with the local surroundings

of their narrators often gets lost. The same applies to the implicit connections they often have to the gender of their narrators and their worlds. In reality, comparatively very few Icelandic legends (even those that appeared in the early "national" collections) appear to have been shared nationwide. This becomes particularly evident when one examines the geographical and spatial features of the legend repertoires of the women interviewed by Hallfreður Örn, as well as those found in other narratives told by women (Gunnell 2016: 30–33; Trausti Dagsson 2014; Júlíana Þóra Magnúsdóttir 2008b: 165). As noted above, the 200 women interviewed tell a total of little above 2,200 legends, of which only about 17% have an unspecified setting or a setting that has no apparent connection to the narrator's residential history. Furthermore, it seems evident that the region in which the women grew up regularly plays a particularly large role in these repertories, 70% of the narratives taking place in the area in which they lived as children. This underlines the fact that Icelandic legend traditions tend to be highly localized, focusing on places that were familiar to the narrators and their audiences. It also underlines how migratory narratives tend to be adapted to fit local circumstances.

The strains of the gender-restricted roles and environmental conditions that were experienced by Icelandic women in their everyday lives are also reflected by the geographical scope and nature of the legends that they told. As has been shown by studies dealing with the geographical aspects of legend repertories of male Icelandic narrators in the past, the settings of their legends are commonly associated with the routes that they travelled and the places outside the farms in which they worked, while the legends told by women tend to be associated with the domestic space of the home and its local surroundings (Júlíana Þóra Magnúsdóttir 2008a: 755–757; Trausti Dagsson 2014: 8–9; Gunnell 2016: 30–32). In short, while men and women certainly shared many aspects of the Icelandic legend tradition, and while their legends were shared with audiences of both genders during storytelling sessions such as those in the *baðstofa*, it is evident that the legends told by most women in the past were generally less diverse in terms of setting than those told by men.

This spatial feature is reflected quite clearly in the legends told by the women interviewed by Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson. If one breaks down the general patterns relating to the settings and narrative spaces in the roughly 2,200 legends told by women and compares them to the patterns reflected in the legends told by a small sample group of men in the same sources (see Fig. 4), it becomes evident that the emphases are somewhat different as the studies noted above have shown. Women's legends appear to revolve noticeably more around the indoor and outdoor spaces of the farm itself than those told by men. This is, of course, understandable, given the fact that the farm and its indoor spaces were

not only the main living space inhabited by women, but also their predominant working space. In short, the legends told by women tend to reflect the lives and concerns of those who tell them.

The most noticeable difference between men's and women's uses of spaces in their legends is seen in the occurrence of what might be termed "the wilderness", that is, the uncultivated spaces between settlements, such as the highlands and the sea. It is noteworthy that these types of spaces are far more common in legends told by men, underlining the fact that in rural Iceland in the past, the wilderness belonged predominantly to men's sphere of activity and experience. While it does still occur as a setting or part of a setting for about 34% of the legends told by women, there is also a significant difference in *how* men and women *make use of* the wilderness as a setting in their stories. The women's standpoint here is often more complex, often less focused on the event *in situ*. One can take as an example the following two narratives about an accident at sea, the one on the left being told by a man, Jóhannes Magnússon (1877–1970), while the one on the right is told by a woman, Lilja Björnsdóttir (1894–1971).

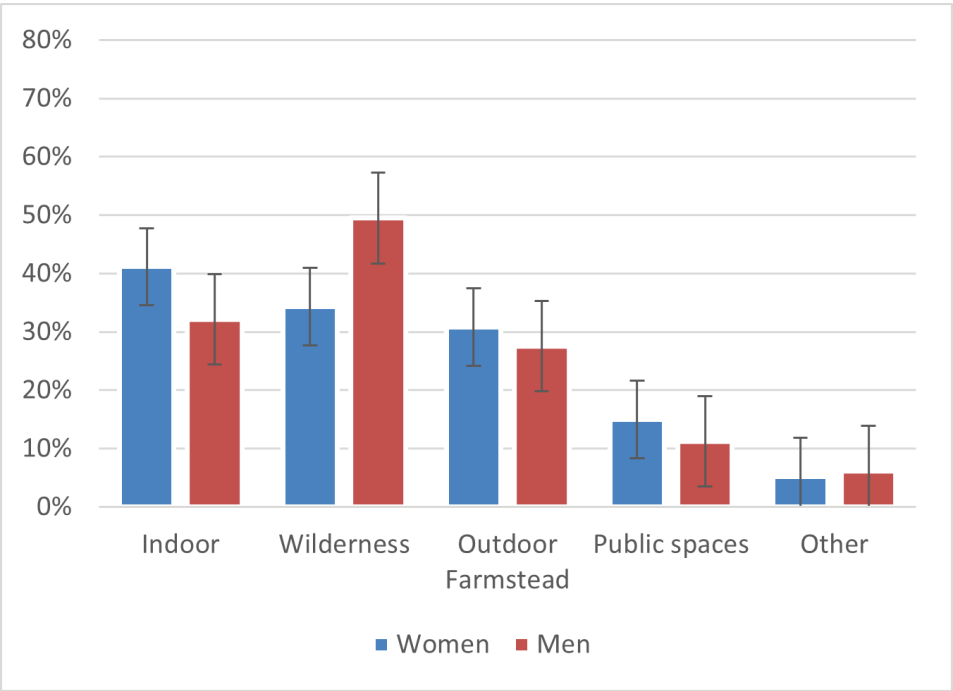

Figure 4. *Types of spaces occurring in legends told by women (N=2235) and men (N=196). The error bar shows the standard error.*

> I knew the foreman of a boat who rowed out from the same place as me, from Guðlaugsá, out there in Ströndin. I was rowing out from there for two fishing seasons. And there was a man there who lived in the western fjords, who was called Guðmundur Benediktsson, and was a great fisherman. He never failed to catch anything, never. Well … there was this rock on the way out from Eyrar to Núpir, which was covered in water at high tide and visible when it was low. But it was a sure place for fish, in front of the rock. I was fishing out there two seasons and nothing ever happened, I was always careful to keep to deep water. Otherwise you could end up on top of the rock, but that never happened. But one time this Guðmundur came along with a large catch of ocean quahaug from Staðareyrar, he was in a group with other men. There were six men in a boat packed with ocean quahaug, and they got stranded on the rock and all of them drowned there. That was a real tragedy. (SÁM 90/2323)
>
> The night the lightship *Hermóður* sunk in bad weather, just out from Reykjanesröst I think it was, it went down on the way from the Westmann Islands to Reykjavík, I remember it well. That same night I dreamt of my husband who had died long before but had been on *Hermóður* for some time, and he said: "Can you put my clothes together because I'm going on board *Hermóður*?" He had known about this, he had known that *Hermóður* was going to sink because he had been on the lightship *Hermóður* for some time before. (SÁM 89/1913).

Unlike men, who commonly take a secular approach to such accidents and stick to the course of events that take place at sea, women tend to take a different standpoint and often draw on the supernatural tradition in such narratives, and especially dreams that take place at home. Dream narratives, such as the one

given above, are by nature multi-spatial and provide women with opportunities to transcend the more limited physical space they inhabit and participate in narrative themes dealing with important events and places to which they otherwise have little physical access. These kinds of dream narratives, which usually take the form of memorates, seem to be particularly common in the repertoires of those women who moved to new communities as adults, sometimes allowing them narrative access to contemporary people and events that take place in their former childhood communities which are now physically/geographically distant.[17]

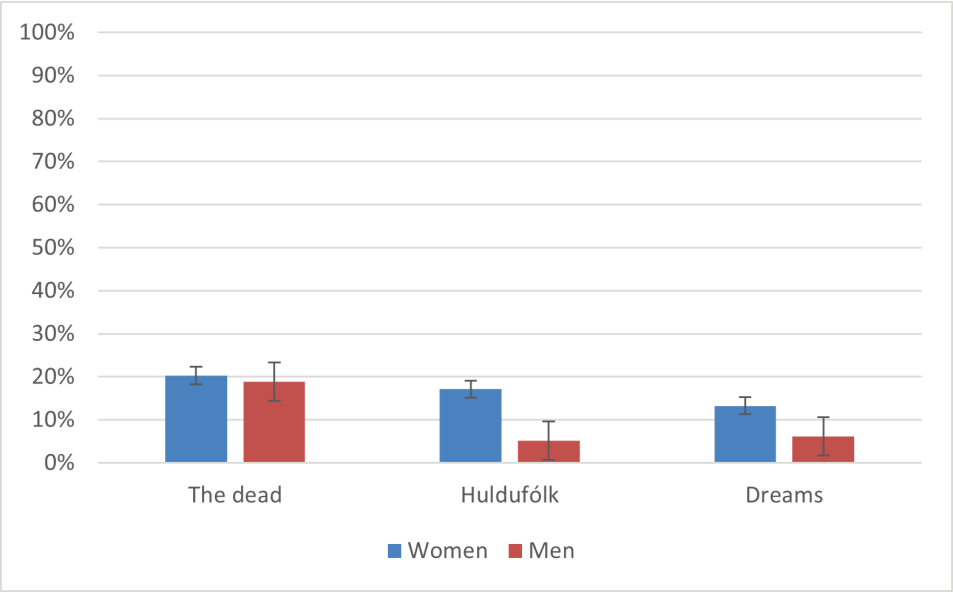

Figure 5. *The occurrence of three different supernatural themes in legends told by women (N=2235) and men (N= 196). The error bar shows the standard error.*

Another aspect of folk belief that forms a feature of women's narrative traditions and is directly related to their living spaces is reflected in the types of supernatural beings that appear in their stories. As Kristen Hastrup, a Danish anthropologist, has shown in her analysis of perceptions and world views in the

Icelandic turf farm community (Hastrup 1990: 255–265), Icelandic folk belief traditions in the past had an essential spatial component, in that different types of supernatural beings were assigned to different kinds of environment.[18] Trolls, outlaws, and sea and lake monsters belonged to the wilderness outside the cultivated surroundings of the farm, while the *huldufólk* were usually situated in close proximity to the farms themselves, in the rocks and hills that formed a border between the wilderness and the cultivated land of the farm. The dead, however, even though they were evidently seen as inhabiting their graves, were perceived as being spatially independent, and capable of moving around at will.

This spatial component is particularly worth bearing in mind when applied to the supernatural themes encountered in legends told by women and their male counterparts. The largest group of supernatural themes in legends told by both men and women are the dead, which appear at a similar rate in the legends of both sexes. There is, however, a difference in the kinds of ghosts that occur in these legends. On closer examination, about half of these legends told by women deal with so-called *ættardraugar* (family spirits), revenants that haunt families for several generations, typically making themselves evident in the domestic space of farms visited by the unfortunate family members (on *ættardraugur* see Gunnell 2012). In short, the *ættardraugar* tradition has a particularly strong spatial connection to the space inhabited by women, which may explain why these figures appear so frequently in women's legend repertoires.

The second largest category of supernatural beings to appear in the legends told by women are the earlier noted *huldufólk*, who appear in about 17% of the legends. It is interesting to note that while women appear to tell a similar number of legends about the dead as their male peers, they appear to be far more interested in the *huldufólk* who only account for about 5% of the legends told by men in the same sources. This gender-misbalance (the *huldufólk* appearing more than three times as often in women's tales than in those of men) suggests that to some degree the *huldufólk* were perceived as being more closely associated with women than men (on this, see also Gunnell 2018). As with the *ættardraugar*, this might be seen as being quite logical considering the fact that the world of the *huldufólk* was so closely connected to the cultivated life of the farm, the well-being of the farm being closely bound up with the maintenance of good relations with these supernatural beings.

Indeed, there are many signs that the narrative tradition associated with the *huldufólk* was predominantly shaped by women. As has been underlined by several scholars working on this topic in the Icelandic legend tradition (see, e.g., Almqvist 2008: 273–342; Guðrún Bjartmarsdóttir 1982: 319–336), legends

dealing with the *huldufólk* tend to deal with domestic issues usually associated with women, such as childbearing, farming, the securing of food and other household issues. These legends thus lend a mystical character to the world of women and their surroundings, simultaneously offering them ways of dealing with various problems that they faced in their everyday lives. A good example of such navigation can be found in those legends that deal with the consequences of tampering with land belonging to the *huldufólk*. A number of such legends can be found in the repertoires of the women under discussion here, such as the following account told by Bjarney Guðmundsdóttir (1893–1974):

> *He was called Hermann and really wanted to extend the house. Then a woman came to her* [his wife]*, she dreamed of her* [this woman]*, and begged her not to let him extend the house. She asked him not to, but he did it all the same, extended the house. And then the winter after, he lost 50 sheep, he lost all these sheep and left next spring. Then he moved out to Bjarnarnes and when he was doing the last trip* [on the boat] *with his wife and child, a 12- or 13-year-old boy, they got so sick that when they were off Barðsvík, he had to put them on shore. And they landed there. And then he went off, he went out and never came back. He was never seen again*. (SÁM 89/2073)

As might be noticed, this legend, like others of a similar kind, has two axes of conflict rather than just one. The first reflects a conflict between the inhabitants of the farm and the supernatural, providing an implicit warning to audiences about the dangers associated with disrespecting such forces. The second conflict is more gendered and has a great deal to do with issues concerning the economic position of women and their overall lack of power with regard to decision-making.[19] While women were certainly more closely associated with the domestic space of the farm than men, they nonetheless tended to have a subordinate role within the general social organization of the farm. Looking at these legends from this viewpoint, the roles of the supernatural woman and the housewife merge, the human woman becoming in a sense an extension of the former rather than an independent player in the legend, something that ultimately adds to the potential power of the housewife. Arguably, such legends can also be understood as providing a warning to men not to side-line their wife's opinions. For women in rural Iceland in the early 1900s, it might thus be argued that such legends, like the others discussed elsewhere in this chapter, supplied an effective means of giving voice to their hidden concerns about their surroundings.

CONCLUSION

If we pull together the various spatial aspects involved in Icelandic women's legend-telling noted above, it is immediately evident that folk narrative archives, such as that used in this article, have the potential to provide valuable insights about the contextual surroundings of earlier storytelling, both directly and indirectly. Taking a spatially oriented approach to the narrative traditions of women in the past, like the one used here, is especially valuable considering the strong emphasis that scholars have historically tended to place on the storytelling of men. As this article has noted, while women in Iceland in the late nineteenth century and early 1900s were largely confined to the farm in their everyday lives, they still had valuable social networks that extended beyond the domestic spaces of their homes and, in many cases, also proved to be comparatively mobile, among others as immigrants moving to new communities. In Iceland's rural community of the past, it is also clear that women played an important role within the transmission of oral narratives, as narrators who shared their narratives across different communities and as performers of narratives within the domestic space of the farms.

In short, while the Icelandic farm with its communal *baðstofa* in the late nineteenth century was essentially a central performance space for both men and women, this space was nonetheless evidently still influenced by gender and different gender roles reflected both in terms of who told narratives of different times, and the nature of the narratives told and the spaces they reflected. Evidently, the performance sessions that took place in the dark *rökkrin* period were quite different to those that occurred later in the evening, during the *kvöldvaka*. The *rökkrin* sessions were not only dominated by women's creativity and oral storytelling, but also involved a different, more intimate space in which only some residents of the household (mainly women and children) participated in the storytelling session. Women's storytelling performances thus seem to have taken place in more private settings than those that provided the context for men's performances. This might be said to bring us back to the familiar association between men and the public sphere and women and the private sphere, even though the boundaries in Iceland were clearly somewhat more blurred than those encountered elsewhere.

Finally, as has been shown above, gender-related differences can also be seen in the way Icelandic men and women in the past incorporated the spaces they themselves inhabited into their legend tradition. While the farm might have been the centre of economic and cultural production for both men and women, different gender roles and different spheres of activity meant that women had

to some extent different experiences, knowledge, and perceptions of the farm and its surroundings from those experienced by men. Women's legends are noticeably more centred on the living space of the farm than those told by men. They also make both less and more complicated uses of the wilderness and other distant places in their legends, often combining them in some way with their own living spaces. In a similar way, it is evident that the most common supernatural themes in legends told by women are also those that are most directly connected to the farm in the traditional Icelandic world view. More often than not, these legends deal with problems that women faced in their daily lives within the domestic space at a time when the world order was still somewhat skewed against them. Arguably, these legends often also served to add a mystical layer to their daily living spaces, effectively transforming it to a new, more meaningful place. They were also a valuable means for women to express their feelings about their experiences, concerns, their dreams, and their discomfort with regard to the subordinate role they experienced within these spaces.

NOTES

[1] This article follows the Icelandic custom of citing Icelandic authors by both first name and last name (patronym) and listing them alphabetically under their first names in the references.

[2] This material will be referred to under its archive classification SÁM. These audio records (and many others) have been digitalized in recent years and are now available online as part of the Ísmús database (© 2017) at http://www.ismus.is/.

[3] In the article I will use the term "legends" broadly as a concept covering all reality-based narratives, including personal experience narratives, memorates, and joculates, which will all be treated as subcategories of the former.

[4] See, for example, Ástríður Thorarensen (on Sigríður Jónsdóttir) (SÁM 92/3002); Guðbjörg Bjarman (on Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir) (SÁM 89/1754); Halldóra Sigurðardóttir (on Þuríður Guðmundsdóttir) (SÁM 85/219); Hulda Jónsdóttir (on Sigríður Jónatansdóttir) (SÁM 92/2991); Ingibjörg Finnsdóttir (on Guðrún Hannesdóttir) (SÁM 88/1561); Kristín Jensdóttir (on Guðrún Magnúsdóttir) (SÁM 89/1865); Kristín Jakobína Sigurðardóttir (on Guðrún Jónsdóttir (SÁM 90/2283); Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir (on Guðríður Jóhannsdóttir) (SÁM 89/1761); Lilja Jóhannsdóttir (on Sigríður from Jörfi) (SÁM 92/2643); Sigurbjörn Snjólfsson (on Steinunn) (SÁM 92/2672); Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson (on Valgerður from Hoffell) (SÁM 85/237); and Þuríður Björnsdóttir (on unnamed "old women") (SÁM 89/1889). Storytelling by travelling women is also mentioned a few times in the answers to ÞÞ Questionnaire 7, in answers ÞÞ 428, ÞÞ 439, ÞÞ 454 and ÞÞ 463.

[5] Translation of all quotes by Icelandic informants: Terry Gunnell. As underlined in this account, as in many others, *orlofskonur* clearly played a large role in the wonder tale

tradition. This, nonetheless, does not mean that they did not tell legends as well, as one can see from Ástríður's remark about Guðrún's conversation with the householders. It is, of course, probable that the informants, most of whom were young children during the time when *orlofskonur* were still visiting, would have been more interested in wonder tales than legends.

[6] On Icelandic migratory legends dealing primarily with female characters and women's experience, see, for example, Almqvist (2008) and Guðrún Bjartmarsdóttir (1982).

[7] The two groups of women are distinguished entirely on the grounds of whether they settled down as adults in the region in which they grew up or outside these regions. Those women who settled down in their own childhood communities naturally often moved to new areas later in their lives, to nearby villages or to the capital of Reykjavík also, especially in old age when farms were passed on to children or new owners.

[8] It is noteworthy that the female informants in the survey appear to have adopted considerably more legends into their own repertoires from female family members than from males. It is nonetheless not clear whether this was because women found legends told by other women more interesting and memorable than those told by men, or they were simply more exposed to legends told by their female family members. 165 of the 730 legends noted above were told by the women's mothers as opposed to only 112 that were heard from their fathers. 59 legends were learned from grandmothers as opposed to 34 learned from grandfathers, and 49 came from other female family members as opposed to 47 from other male family members (excluding husbands). Interestingly, the women's husbands are only cited as sources of 15 legends, which is somewhat surprising given the fact that over half of the women were widows at the time of the interviews, meaning that the husbands were no longer around to tell their own stories and maintain informal ownership over them.

[9] Here the bias towards these non-related household members being women is clear. Non-family female household members are cited as the source of 49 legends as opposed to only 22 which were told by non-family males. This may be a reflection of the changing social reality in rural Iceland in the early 1900s, at a time when the industrialization of the fishing industry was creating new employment opportunities for men, leaving women as the dominant workforce in the agricultural sphere.

[10] Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson's sources include at least 57 accounts told by male and female informants, which appear to refer to storytelling taking place in the turf farm during *rökkrin*: SÁM 84/17; 84/22-23; 85/228; 85/247; 85/269; 85/272; 85/279; 85/284; 86/811; 86/820; 86/827; 86/845; 86/858; 86/875; 86/888; 88/1505; 88/1529; 88/1559; 88/1561; 88/1571; 88/1575; 88/1631; 89/1717; 89/1719; 89/1770; 89/1784; 89/1793-94; 89/1812; 89/1847; 89/1865; 89/1879; 89/1972; 89/2022; 89/2048; 90/2100; 90/2107; 90/2111; 90/2211; 90/2246; 90/2283; 90/2306; 90/2329; 90/2349; 91/2370; 91/2426; 92/2639; 92/2675; 92/2736; 92/3002-03; 93/3380; 93/3510; 93/3534; and 93/3621. Not all of these accounts specify that the *baðstofa* was the storytelling space during *rökkrin* – all have thus been included here by default (unless any other place is specified).

[11] Of the 57 accounts on *rökkrin* storytelling, 37 refer to female narrators or female groups of narrators, some mentioned by name and others by gender-specific terms such as mothers, grandmothers, maids or *orlofskonur*, as opposed to only 10 accounts which include references to male narrators or a group of male narrators. 18 accounts include general references to narrators that are non-gender specific, making use of terms such as *fólk* (people) or *gestir* (guests).

[12] The *huldufólk* (lit. hidden people), sometimes referred to as *álfar* in Iceland, are the Icelandic equivalent of the Norwegian huldre or *underjordiske* (lit. underground people), the Irish and Scottish fairies and the Shetlandic *trows*. Similar in appearance and size to human beings, they are believed to live in rocks close the settlement areas. See further Gunnell 2007.

[13] See, for example, Einar Sigurfinnsson (SÁM 93/3621); Hulda Jónsdóttir (92/2991); Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir (SÁM 88/1571); Jóhanna Elín Ólafsdóttir (SÁM 89/1879); Sigríður Benediktsdóttir (SÁM 89/1720); Sigríður Guðmundsdóttir (SÁM 89/2048); Sigurjón Jónsson (SÁM 84/23); Steinn Ásmundsson (SÁM 85/269).

[14] In the accounts, legends about ghosts are noted as being frequently told 24 times and legends about *huldufólk* 18 times.

[15] While these sources as well as the answers concerning the *kvöldvaka* in Questionnaire 7 appear to largely underline the role of men as the main performers during the *kvöldvaka*, it is nonetheless clear that some women certainly did assume this role, not least during the period from January to spring, when, as noted above, many men were away during the fishing season. One informant of Hallfreður Örn's, Kristín Jakobína Sigurðardóttir (SÁM 90/2287), notes, for example, that while women generally rarely read out loud during the *kvöldvaka* because of the background noise, her sister, who was considered an exceptionally good reader, did sometimes take on this role. It is also clear that on some farms, children would read during the *kvöldvaka* in order to practise their reading skills (Magnús Gíslason 1977: 95).

[16] In his analysis of the Icelandic *kvöldvaka* (based on the earlier-noted questionnaire), Magnús Gíslason (1977: 144) suggests that the telling of oral narratives, including both wonder tales and legends, was a common activity at this time. Hallfreður Örn's sources, however, do not support this claim. As suggested above, most informants appear to assign this kind of oral storytelling to *rökkrin* rather than to the *kvöldvaka* itself. Oral storytelling during the *kvöldvaka* is only mentioned in about 15 of Hallfreður Örn's accounts. 250 accounts mention the reading of stories aloud during the *kvöldvaka*.

[17] It is noteworthy that the narrator Guðrún Jóhannsdóttir (1897–1987), for example, tells seven such multi-spatial narratives connecting her adult home in Skarðströnd in western Iceland with her childhood home in Grindavík on the Reykjanes Peninsula more than 200 kilometres away (SÁM 88/1902; 88/1706; 89/2010; 92/2580-81). As underlined by Heijnen's study on Icelandic dream narratives (see Heijnen 2013), Icelanders tend to see dreams as a form of reality and means of receiving communications from the dead and other supernatural beings or of gaining knowledge about future events. According to a recent survey on Icelandic belief (2006/2007), 36% of men and 41% of women claimed they had gained knowledge about future events from their dreams; about 90% (86% of men and 94% of women) believed such prophetic dreams were possible (see Ásdís Aðalbjörg Arnalds & Ragna Benedikta Garðarsdóttir & Unnur Diljá Teitsdóttir 2008: 16, 79).

[18] For a slightly different approach to the relationship between space, storytellers, and the supernatural in legends, see Broadwell and Tangherlini's "Ghostscape" (2017).

[19] Until 1923, husbands had autonomy over Icelandic farms, even when the farm had belonged to their wives before marriage. Women nonetheless gained a limited degree of autonomy over the farms in 1900 when new laws stated that while the husband

would have the autonomy over the farm, he could not sell it or mortgage it without his wife's consent (Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir & Guðrún Dís Jónatansdóttir 1998: 147, 150).

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Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir is pursuing a PhD at the Department of Folkloristics and Museum Studies at the University of Iceland and works as adjunct teacher at the same department. Her PhD thesis deals with legend tradition of Icelandic women born in the latter part of the nineteenth century and their relationship with women's experiences, spaces, and social conditions.

jthm2@hi.is

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ANALYSIS OF THE WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION OF THE 'MAN OR ANIMAL IN THE MOON' MOTIFS

Marc Thuillard
Independent Researcher
thuillweb@hotmail.com

Abstract: For millennia, people have seen a man, an animal, or an object as they look at the moon. The motif of the 'frog/toad in the Moon' was recorded in writing in the *Book of Changes* (*I Ching*) over 2400 years ago. The 'man in the Moon' theme is found in old Norse literature in the *Younger Edda*. In Mesoamerica, the story of the 'rabbit in the Moon' is pre-Columbian. This study analyses the different versions by combining areal studies as well as structural and statistical analyses with information from ancient texts and archaeological artefacts. In particular, I compare the geographic distribution of the main motifs to the 2,278 motifs in Yuri Berezkin's database. In this context, I report on the observed similarities between the geographic distribution of the 'man or animal in the Moon' motifs and the two of the most widespread earth creation myths.

Keywords: Book of Changes, creation myths, Lady Dai, man/frog/rabbit in the Moon

The parallel development of an extensive electronic database and data analytics enables the analysis of myths at an unprecedented scale. The largest and most complete database contains 2,278 motifs from over 934 different peoples in all parts of the world (Berezkin 2015a). Its analysis permits the extraction of statistical information on the worldwide distribution of motifs. Myths are deconstructed into motifs, and the presence or absence of a motif in a given tradition is binary coded. The first global studies (Korotaev & Khalturina 2011; Berezkin 2013, 2017) using the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) have shown that the different motifs group within clusters corresponding to geographical regions. More advanced classification methods have been applied to the same data (Thuillard et al. 2018). The motifs are best classified into two main groups having an overlapping geographic distribution. Quite surprisingly, the two groups contain motifs with different themes. In the first group,

motifs are often related to man/woman. Motifs related to the moon and the sun are predominant in the second group, with motifs associated with creation myths ('earth-diver', emergence myth). This study focuses on the second group containing most of the moon and sun motifs and, more precisely, those about the distribution of the 'man or animal in the Moon' motifs and their possible connections to other motifs in the databank.

From an ethno-astronomical perspective, it is not surprising that the moon is a universal theme. The moon always shows the same side to the viewer and, therefore, the same pattern of dark spots associated with the Lunar Maria is visible at each full moon. Depending on the local traditions, the dark spots are interpreted as a man, an animal, or an object (Bascom 1981; Harley 1885; Berezkin 2015a, b). The most widespread animals seen in the moon are the rabbit (or hare) and the frog (or toad). The 'rabbit, resp. frog in the Moon' is well-documented, widespread, and therefore best suited for a comparative study. For this study, no distinction is made between hare and rabbit or between frog and toad. Statistical analysis would otherwise be arduous as toads and frogs are often wrongly identified in different records. In Eurasia, the frog and the turtle are often interchangeable (Poupard 2018). The 'water-carrier in the Moon' is found from Europe to the Americas, mainly in the northern areas. In one very widespread version, the Moon protects a poor, often mistreated girl fetching water, and takes her up to herself. In another version, the Moon punishes an arrogant young woman by taking her away. The Moon acts here similarly to a human who may pity someone or punish a person for misbehaving. Quite often, both versions are recorded in the same cultural area.

A large proportion of the myths in Berezkin's database was collected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and few in ancient times. Early recordings of a myth are essential as they prove its great antiquity and help to discuss its stability over several millennia. Ancient sources also furnish an upper bound to the time-origin of a myth. The peculiarity of the 'man or animal in the Moon' motif is that it has been recorded on several continents: in the *Younger Edda*, a collection of Old Norse literature brought together by the Icelandic scholar Snorri Sturluson around 1220 AC (Anderson 1879); in ancient Chinese divination books (third century BC but from pre-Confucius origin); and in Mesoamerica by Bernardino de Sahagún (Sahagún & Anderson 1975), originally published around 1579, in what is regarded as the first ethnographic research study in Mesoamerica. The two later sources anchor the motifs in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica and China to times before Buddhist influence.

In short, this study combines areal information, statistical analysis on the geographic distribution of the motifs, structural analysis of information from ancient written sources, and well-documented archaeological artefacts. The first

chapter discusses the similarities between the moon motifs and the over 2,500 other motifs, focusing on the ones with the highest and lowest correlation values (i.e., motifs with a similar and complementary geographic distribution). These motifs include the two most widespread creation myths. A structural analysis completes the area study in the second chapter. I show, using the earliest records of the motifs, that the 'rabbit in the Moon' motif is often related to the theme of life and death, while the 'water-carrier in the Moon' and the 'frog in the Moon' motifs are related to water. In particular, the 'water-carrier in the Moon' has a geographic distribution similar to the 'bird-diver' motif, a creation myth in which a bird brings back some mud from the bottom of the primeval sea. In most stories, mud grows or expands to become the earth once at the sea's surface. The third chapter succinctly analyses the oldest literary and archaeological sources on these motifs. Under the hypothesis that the motifs may have diffused or been brought into North America from Eurasia, the fourth chapter discusses the relative timing of their possible arrival.

AREAL ANALYSIS

Figure 1 shows the overall distribution of all the main motifs of the 'man or animal in the Moon.' The 'man in the Moon' is common in the northern hemisphere but rare in Africa and Australia.

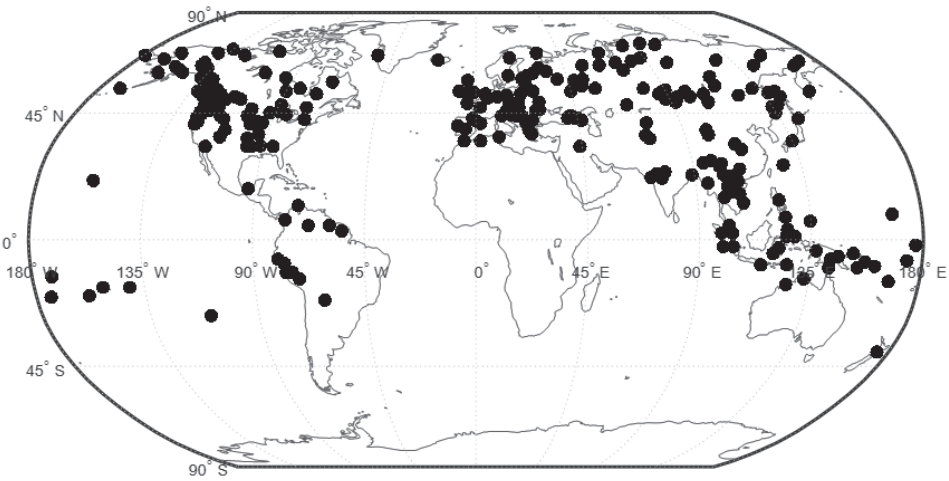

Figure 1. *Distribution of the 'man in the Moon' motif.*

This study focuses on the 'water-carrier in the Moon', the most widespread version of the 'man in the Moon', and on the 'animal in the Moon' motifs. Figure 2 shows the motifs' geographic distribution. The 'water-carrier in the Moon' version is recorded in Northern Eurasia, North America, Korea and Japan.

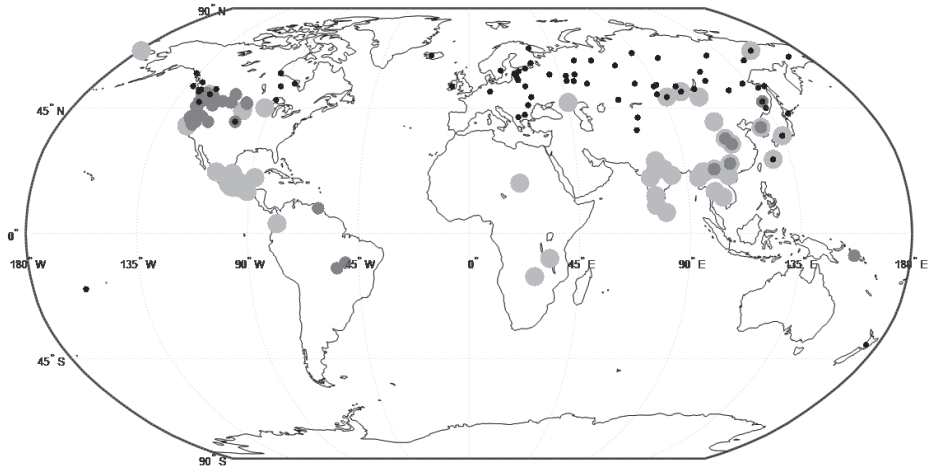

Figure 2. *Distribution of the 'water-carrier in the Moon' (small black dots), 'frog in the Moon' (medium grey dots), and 'rabbit in the Moon' (large light grey dots) motifs.*

The correlation value between two motifs is computed with the usual method (see the appendix). A high correlation indicates a similar geographic distribution. A negative value indicates that they tend to occupy complementary distributions. Table I (appendix) shows the motifs with the largest correlation coefficients to the 'water-carrier in the Moon'. They mostly correspond to motifs found in northern Eurasian and American regions (Berezkin 2010, 2015a; d'Huy 2012; Frank 2015) and are often related to an element (water, fire, earth), a plant (bush, thicket), or an animal (bird, dog, bear). Two motifs in Table I are associated with famous episodes in the 'obstacle flight' (Boas 1895, 1914; Thompson 1955–1958 [1932–1936]). In the obstacle flight, the fleeing person throws objects behind to delay the chaser. The 'man in the Moon' is often 'holding a bush', a motif that one also finds in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* (act V, scene 1):[1] "All that I have to say, is to tell you that the lantern is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thornbush, my thornbush; and this dog, my dog." The 'water-carrier in the Moon' is well correlated to the 'bird-diver' motif in the northern regions of Eurasia and also to a lesser extent

in North America. The 'bird-diver' is an instance of the so-called 'earth-diver' myth (Napolskikh 2012). The 'earth-diver' is an animal that plunges into the primeval sea to bring up mud to form the earth. Depending on the tradition, the diver is a bird, a muskrat, a beaver, a crustacean, a wild boar, a turtle, or a frog.

The motif with the smallest correlation is 'mankind ascends from the underworld', a motif associated with emergence myths, in which the first people are not created but come to earth from the underworld (Le Quellec 2014; Berezkin 2007). Figure 3 shows the complementary distribution of the 'bird-diver' and the emergence motif.

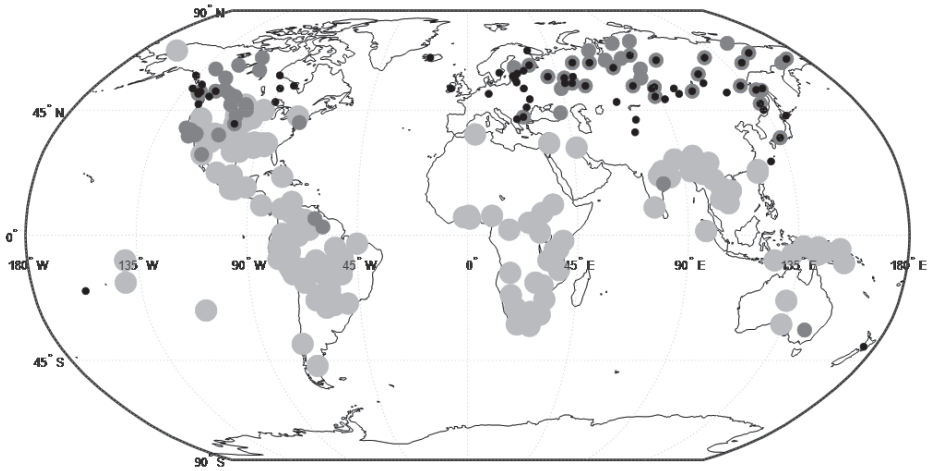

Figure 3. *Complementary distribution of the 'water-carrier in the Moon' (small black dots); 'bird-diver' (medium grey dots), and emergence motifs ('mankind ascends from the underworld'; large light grey dots).*

STRUCTURAL APPROACH

Let us now analyse the main 'animal in the Moon' motifs using a structural approach. The 'rabbit in the Moon' is recorded in regions associated with the emergence myth and in transition zones between the 'earth-diver' and the emergence myth (in parts of East Asia, the two creation myths are not recorded). In Africa, Rabbit is the messenger from the Moon, whose corrupted message brings death to humans (Le Quellec 2015). The relationship between the Moon,

the rabbit, and sacrifice in a fire is found in India and Mesoamerica (Thuillard & Le Quellec 2017). The Śaśa-Jātaka tells the story of a rabbit transformed into the Moon by the Buddha, thanking him for throwing itself into a fire. The rabbit is now seen 'eternally' in the Moon. In Mesoamerica, the story goes like this. After much hesitation, Teccistecatl (Moon) follows Nanauatzin (Sun) into a great fire. To punish Teccistecatl for his cowardice, one of the gods threw a rabbit into his face, which is always seen there (Bonnefoy 1981; Sahagún 1975; Soustelle 1940). In East Asia and especially in China, an ancient myth relates a 'rabbit, a toad/frog in the Moon' to an elixir of eternal life.

In summary, 'rabbit in the Moon' brings death to men in Africa, sacrifices itself with much courage in India, is somewhat coward in Mesoamerica, and prepares a life elixir in East Asia. In East Asia, a frog is also associated with the Moon. In Northern Eurasia the 'water-carrier in the Moon' is correlated to the 'bird-diver' motif. Some Chinese versions of the 'frog and/or rabbit in the Moon' include a water pail. In North America, the frog often brings rain or is seen in the Moon with a water bucket (Berezkin 2010). In some Mesoamerican versions, the 'rabbit in the Moon' warns people of a coming flood or helps them during that flood. The 'frog marrying the Moon' motif found in North America (Lévi-Strauss 1968) does not seem directly related to the other 'rabbit in the Moon' stories. The diagram in Figure 4 summarizes the discussion.

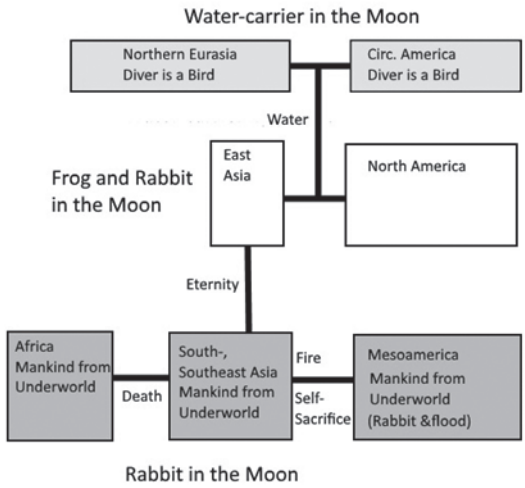

Figure 4. *The diagram shows the division of Eurasia and the Americas schematically into zones with similar creation myths: 'diver is a bird' (Northern Eurasia and Circumpolar North indigenous peoples in America) and 'mankind from the underworld' (bottom). The 'water carrier in the Moon' is well correlated to the 'bird-diver'. In Africa, the 'rabbit in the Moon' is related to death's appearance, in Mesoamerica and India to self-sacrifice, and in China to immortality. In Mesoamerica, the 'rabbit in the Moon' may help during a flood, a theme related to an abundance of water. (The solid line between the 'rabbit' and the 'frog & rabbit' layers is drawn between Asia 'blocks' due to geographic proximity.)*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

Dating the antiquity of a myth is very challenging. The 'man or animal in the Moon' motif is, in this perspective, quite exciting as it was recorded in written form quite early: in Mesoamerica, India, and in Nordic Europe in the early thirteenth century and in China as early as the third century BC. The 'water-carrier' motif is also quite widespread. Let us recall the traditional English nursery rhyme: "Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water". This rhyme may be related to an episode of the *Younger Edda* (Anderson 1879):

> *Moon guides the course of the moon and rules its waxing and waning. He took from the earth two children… Bil and Hjuke, as they were going from the well … carrying on their shoulders the bucket called Sager and the pole Simul… These children always accompany Moon, as can be seen from the earth.*

In China, some ancient texts written on bamboo slips include both the 'frog in the Moon' and the 'man in the Moon' and are represented on artefacts preserved in archaeological records. Mawangdui is the tomb site of Lady Dai, who died in the second century BC. A silk banner was found among the many finds. A section of the banner, shown in Figure 5, represents Heaven with a moon crescent, a frog/toad, and a rabbit. While the connection between the moon, the frog, and the 'rabbit in the Moon' is undisputed, other representations on the banner are debated (Silbergeld 1982).

Figure 5. *Detail of the Lady Dai banner showing a toad/frog in the Moon with a rabbit (second century BC), courtesy of Hunan Provincial Museum, Changsha. The black-and-white image is digitally processed using Matlab to enhance the contour of the frog on the Moon.*

An ancient divination book, known in the Western world as the Book of Changes, was discovered at the same site. Incidentally, the book contains hexagrams. The famous mathematician Leibniz (Swetz 2003) recognized them as a natural representation of binary mathematics. The book includes the story of the flight of Heng E to the Moon. In 1993, at Wangjiatai, the discovery of bamboo slips from the Gui cang, another divination text believed to be forever lost, stirred the scholarly world. Shaughnessy (2014) published a translation of it. The manuscript is older (mid-third century BC) than the Mawangdui text (Sun and Chen 2009). The text reads, "Yi requested the medicine of immortality from the Western Queen Mother, Heng E stole it to flee to the Moon…. Heng E subsequently consigned her body to the Moon, and this became the frog." No mention of a rabbit here. According to Shaughnessy, the Gui cang predates Confucius. Comparing the two texts suggests that the 'frog in the Moon' may have preceded the rabbit in China. The high frequency of frog motifs in Neolithic potteries and studies on homonymies strengthen this hypothesis (Zhang Jian 2004).

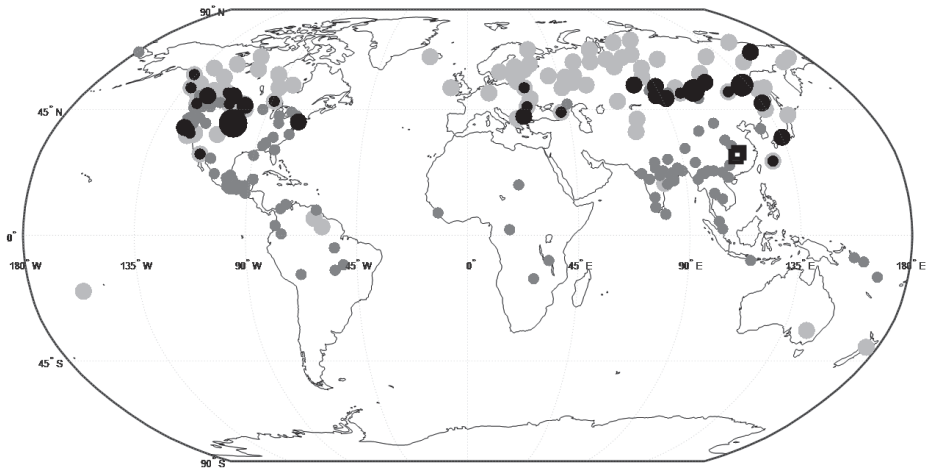

Figure 6. *Distribution of the a) 'water-carrier in the Moon' and 'bird-diver' (large light grey dots); b) the 'animal in the Moon' together with other related motifs: 'diver is a crustacean, turtle or frog', 'cosmic turtle or frog' (medium-size grey dots). A dot indicates that there is at least one motif among the motifs in a) resp. b). The black dots are traditions sharing motifs in a) and also in b). Their size is proportional to the number of shared motifs. The squares indicate the approximate position of Mawangdui (Lady Dai Banner) and Wangjiatai (Gui cang on bamboo slips).*

Seeing a 'frog or a rabbit in the Moon' is a little bit odd but plausible. However, seeing a man (or woman) carrying a water pail is quite strange. How did such

a motif become so widespread? The story of Heng E contains an instance of the 'man in the Moon' and the 'frog in the Moon' motifs. The frog is almost universally related to rain and water. Knowing this association, finding a 'water-carrier in the Moon' seems less strange. The analysis suggests that the 'frog in the Moon' transformed into a 'water-carrier in the Moon' possibly in East Asia. The following chapter on dating furnishes further support for this hypothesis.

RELATIVE DATING OF MOTIFS USING THE CONTINUITY HYPOTHESIS

Figure 6 shows the distribution of the a) 'water-carrier in the Moon' and 'bird-diver'; b) the 'animal in the Moon' together with other related motifs: 'diver is a crustacean, turtle or frog', 'cosmic turtle or frog'. The cosmic turtle or frog is a motif related to a giant turtle, tortoise, or frog supporting the world. The black dots in Figure 6 show traditions sharing motifs typical of northern regions (a: large light grey dots) and motifs mostly associated with southern regions (b: medium-size grey dots). The transition is quite sharp in Eurasia. Tungusic-speaking groups represent the majority of the cultures at the interface. The transition zone extends west of Europe and east of Japan. On the west of Eurasia, the main languages spoken by the peoples at the interface belong to the Turkic family of languages. Napolskikh (2012) suggests that the 'earth-diver' myth was brought into Europe by the Avars along the Eurasian steppe corridor. Alternatively, the presence of an apparent corridor may be the result of invasions over the cultural border between ethnic groups. As shown by Avilin (2018) for the 'Moon carrier' motif in the case of Belarus, its presence or absence is related to elements of spiritual cultures.

Quite interestingly, one observes two transition zones, one in the Americas and the other in Eurasia. Let us discuss what could explain such an observation. Figure 7 shows three simple mechanisms that may explain the puzzling similarity observed between motifs in remote areas.

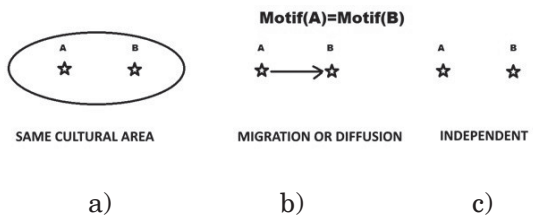

Figure 7. *A motif may be shared by two remote peoples a) having shared the same cultural area; b) after migration or diffusion from neighbour to neighbour; c) independently of each other (chance).*

A motif may be shared if at some time: a) two peoples (say A and B) were in the same cultural area, or b) a population migrated to a far-off region and brought the motif along, or c) the motif diffused from neighbour to neighbour and was subsequently 'erased', creating a gap in-between. Finally, the two motifs may be the same simply by chance and represent 'independent internal developments' in each cultural zone (Fig. 7c). It is often difficult to decide between the different hypotheses (Boas 1896; Fraser 1965; Littleton 1974; Segal 1999). In the absence of convincing proof for the contrary, one should assume that a motif has developed independently in two separate regions.

However, let us discuss possible arguments favouring the common origin of some motifs recorded in Eurasia and the Americas. Seeing a 'water-carrier in the Moon' with an object in the hands seems quite unlikely. The same holds for the following creation myth: a small quantity of earth taken by a bird from the bottom of the primeval sea expands and becomes the earth. It would be astonishing if these motifs developed independently in both Eurasia and the Americas. Several seemingly unrelated motifs have a geographic distribution similar to the 'water-carrier in the Moon', both in the Americas and Eurasia. Motifs related to the flight obstacle ('comb becomes a thicket' and 'whetstone becomes a mountain') have a very similar geographic distribution in both Eurasia and the Americas (the 'comb becomes a thicket' is present in about half the instances of the 'water-carrier in the Moon', and more than 25% of the 'whetstone becomes a mountain' (see Table II in the appendix).

In some other cases, drawing conclusions is more complicated. The 'swan-wife' and 'Moon the protector' motifs are such instances. One finds the motifs in similar regions in Eurasia. The motifs are recorded in circumpolar North America. In those regions, neither the 'earth-diver' nor the 'water-carrier in the Moon' are recorded. Did these motifs develop independently? Did they get 'decoupled' from the 'earth-diver' and the 'water-carrier' motifs during a passage into the Americas? It is difficult to reach a firm conclusion.

Let us consider the 'rabbit in the Moon' and the model in Figure 7b. If one assumes a single origin for the motif, then one concludes that the motif originated either in Africa or Eurasia, as diffusion from Mesoamerica is highly unlikely. The structural analysis supports such a scheme as the motifs in Eurasia and Africa share common concerns with life (eternity) and death. The 'frog in the Moon' seems to have originated in East Asia (independently or concomitantly to the earlier presence of the 'rabbit in the Moon'?). At a later time, the rabbit was added to the frog motif in some of the myth's versions featuring Heng E.

The absolute dating of the appearance of ancient motifs in a region is tough, not to say almost impossible in most cases. The relative dating of two motifs is, however, possible, provided the hypothesis below is confirmed:

Continuity Hypothesis (Fig. 8): If an area with a given motif (1) is separated from another by a large region with a different motif, then one assumes, following the migration/diffusion model, that the second motif appeared later and recovered part of the continuous area of the first motif.

The hypothesis has often been used (Le Quellec 2014; Thuillard & Le Quellec & d'Huy 2018), and I sketch it here again. It is not difficult to construct situations in which it does not hold, but the hypothesis is often reasonable as it is the simplest explanation in conditions described in the model in Figure 7b.

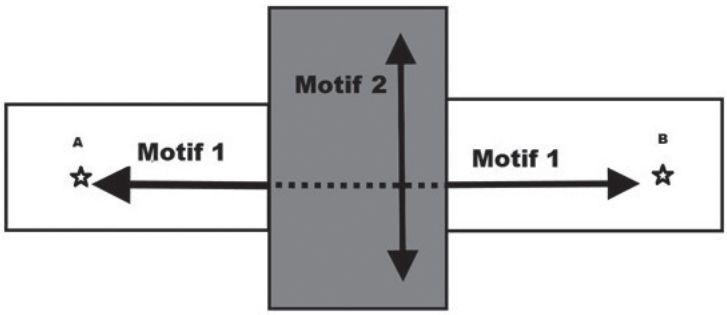

Figure 8. *Considering two motifs with a geographic diffusion as above, if the continuity hypothesis (see text) holds, then motif 1 is older than motif 2.*

In the present discussion, the application of the continuity hypothesis under the migration/diffusion model leads to the following relationships:

- The transfer of the emergence motif into North America is prior to the 'earth-diver' motif.
- The passage of the 'bird-diver' and the 'water-carrier in the Moon' motifs to North America is posterior to the passage of the 'animal in the Moon' motif.

The significant number of complex motifs found in Eurasia and the Americas strongly suggests a diffusion of the motifs though some examples do not rule out the possibility of independent cultural development. Several researchers (Berezkin 2010; Witzel 2012; Le Quellec 2014) have proposed that some motifs reached North America with the first migratory wave, a quite plausible hypothesis in the emergence myth considering its presence besides Eurasia in South America, Australia, and Africa. As a side note, excluding the early passage of a motif generally requires historical indices, but sometimes another hint may

help. For example, the motif 'Orion is a hunter' is recorded in Eurasia and North America. Orion was invisible in Beringia until ca. 6000 BC and, therefore, an early passage of the motif with the first migration wave from Beringia after the last glaciation maximum can be excluded (Thuillard & Le Quellec & d'Huy 2018).

I suggest the following scenario by combining all pieces of information. Assuming a single origin of the motif, the 'rabbit in the Moon' originated either in Africa or Eurasia. The 'frog in the Moon' seems to originate in East Asia independently from the 'rabbit in the Moon'. The 'frog in the Moon' motif is already in the archaeological record prior to the Buddhist influence in China. At some time, the rabbit is added to the frog motif. The water-carrier motif is found in Western Europe and Eurasia, and most likely reached North America later than the 'animal in the Moon' motif. Assuming the unique origin of the myth leads us to suggest that in East Eurasia the frog motif transformed into the 'water-carrier in the Moon'. An independent origin of the two motifs cannot be excluded. A clear boundary is observed in Eurasia between the northern areas with a 'bird-diver' and a 'water-carrier in the Moon' and the more southern regions with no diver or a turtle or frog, crustacean or wild boar diver and a 'frog or rabbit in the Moon'. The boundary is associated with Tungusic-speaking peoples. A corridor along the Eurasian steppes is characterized by the coexistence of northern and southern motifs. The corridor possibly served as a means of penetration for a large number of motifs into Europe.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to warmly thank Professor Yuri Berezkin for sharing access to his database, and Roslyn M. Frank for very helpful discussions.

APPENDIX: CORRELATION BETWEEN MOTIFS

The electronic catalogue of folklore and mythological motifs (Berezkin 2015b and online access in the reference) is the most comprehensive source of material for large-scale studies on the geographic repartition of myths. The data are binary coded with the columns and lines corresponding respectively to the different motifs and traditions. The data are completed with an approximate location of each tradition. The similarity between the distribution of two motifs is characterized by the Pearson correlation factor defined on n samples as $\sum_1^n (x_i - \bar{x})\,(y_i - \bar{y}) / (\sqrt{\sum_1^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}\ \sqrt{\sum_1^n (y_i - \bar{y})^2})$, with $\bar{x}$ as the average value.

With the advances in big data, more advanced similarity measures on binary vectors were developed (Choi & Cha & Tappert 2010). Their effectiveness has been compared (Zhang Bin & Srihari 2013) in complex recognition problems. Excellent results are obtained with the binary Pearson correlation factor. In the following, I explain how the correlation factor is applied to the data. Let us consider three motifs: A1, A2, and A3. A binary number (0 or 1) codes the presence or absence of a motif in the different traditions (or peoples).

A1:	1	1	0	0	1	0
A2:	1	1	0	0	1	0
A3:	0	0	1	1	0	1

The vectors A1 and A2 are the same. Their correlation factor is 1. The vectors A2 and A3 are negatively correlated with a factor equal to –1. The correlation factor is a good indication of whether two motifs have a similar geographic distribution (positive correlation factor) or a complementary distribution (negative factor). The correlation factor does not tell us if the motifs appear in the same tale. For this, a more in-depth analysis is required. Table I shows the motifs with the largest correlation coefficients to the 'water-carrier in the Moon'. The different motifs are enumerated in the descending order of the correlation values.

Table I. *List of the motifs with the largest correlation factors to the 'water-carrier in the moon'. Twelve out of twenty motifs are found both in Eurasia and the Americas.*

Motif	**Correlation factor to 'water-carrier' binary vector**
Water-carrier in the Moon	1.00
Person with an object in hands	0.69
Man in the Moon	0.44
Thunder pursues his enemy	0.43
Holding a bush	0.42
Comb becomes a thicket	0.41
Creator goes away for a while	0.40
The dog's part	0.40
Some earth is concealed	0.39
Female spirit of fire	0.39
Whetstone becomes a mountain	0.35
Swan-wife	0.38
Person turns into bear	0.38
Moon the protector	0.38

Dog is the guard of man	0.37
Quarrel of mouse and bird	0.37
Strange names of the babies	0.37
The diver is a bird	0.37
Milky Way is the way of birds	0.36
The theft of fish	0.36

I have also analysed the composite motif 'water-carrier, or frog or rabbit in the Moon'. The motifs with the largest correlations are 'female spirit of fire', 'thunder pursues his enemy', and 'the earth-diver' (in this order, not considering Moon-related motifs). Again, one observes the correlation between the 'water-carrier, the frog or turtle in the moon' and the earth-diver.

Table II. *List of the number and percentage of traditions in which the 'water-carrier in the Moon' and the motif in the first column are both recorded: columns 2–3 Eurasia (Oceania, Africa); columns 4–5 the Americas (the percentage refers to the number of instances of the 'water-carrier in the Moon').*

1 **Motif**	**2** **Number of instances in Eurasia, Oceania, Africa**	**3** **Percentage of instances with both 'water-carrier in the Moon' and second motif in Eurasia, Oceania, Africa**	**4** **Number of instances in the Americas**	**5** **Percentage of instances with both 'water-carrier in the Moon' and second motif in the Americas**
Water-carrier in the Moon	55	100%	14	100%
Person with an object in hands	93	96%	33	100%
Man in the Moon	166	100%	85	86%
Thunder pursues his enemy	54	56%	8	0%
Holding a bush	15	24%	2	14%
Comb becomes a thicket	80	58%	16	43%
Creator goes away for a while	51	47%	0	0%
The dog's part	26	33%	0	0%

Some earth is concealed	19	27%	0	0%
Female spirit of fire	54	53%	14	7%
Whetstone becomes a mountain	35	38%	14	29%
Swan-wife	55	51%	15	14%
Person turns into bear	25	31%	0	0%
Moon the protector	35	42%	9	0%
Dog is the guard of man	45	42%	0	0%
Quarrel of mouse and bird	29	33%	0	0%
The diver is a bird	40	45%	30	29%
Strange names of the babies	70	53%	0	0%
Milky Way is the way of birds	27	33%	3	0%
The theft of fish	63	49%	0	0%

NOTE

[1] See http://www.literaturepage.com/read/shakespeare-midsummer-night-53.html, last accessed on 30 September 2021.

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Marc Thuillard is a physicist (EPFL Lausanne) and mathematician (Denver University). After his PhD (University of Bern) and a post-doctoral fellowship at the California Institute of Technology, he joined industry and over 20 years has led the global research of a Swiss company in the field of sensors and actuators. Marc is a specialist in data analytics and has written numerous papers, books and patents on the subjects. As an independent researcher, he has developed and applied new signal processing techniques to large databases, developing a central interest in computer-supported classification of folklore and mythology motifs.

thuillweb@hotmail.com

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MOTIFS OF INANIMATE NATURE AND ATMOSPHERIC PHENOMENA IN POLISH FOLKTALES

Marcin Lisiecki
Department of Communication, Media and Journalism
Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland
marlis@umk.pl

Abstract: The main purpose of this paper is to describe Polish folktales about inanimate nature and atmospheric phenomena. There are three reasons for the selection of this topic. Firstly, motifs of nature are not popular in Polish folktales despite the fact that nature itself plays an important role in the life of villagers. Secondly, the themes included in these folktales refer not only to Christianity, but also to local beliefs as well as to Slavic myths. And thirdly, Polish folktales perpetuate the separation of man from nature, with the latter being evil and dangerous.

Keywords: communication, elements, folklore, folktales, local deities and demons, man, nature, Poland, Slavs' myths

In the well-known Polish comedy *Miś* (*Teddy Bear,* 1980, directed by Stanisław Bareja), there is a scene which humorously refers to weather. In that scene the children ask Lech Ryś, an officer of the Citizens' Militia (Milicja Obywatelska), also labelled as Uncle Good-Advice, to advise them how to deal with their friend who uses "bad words":

> Tomek Mazur: *So much snow. Butterfly's leg! I have been waiting for the bus for 15 minutes! Chicken's feather!*
> A girl: *I can't believe it! How dare you use so many nasty words!*
> Tomek Mazur: *And what am I supposed to say? My feet got frozen. Butterfly's leg!*
> Uncle Good-Advice: *As you can see, the climate has been almost always against us; but still, this gives us no reason to use bad words, or does it?*

> A boy: *Precisely! We are telling him that too.*
> Uncle Good-Advice: *I will give you a piece of advice. Next time they cut off the supply of hot water, or the radiators stop working, or else, if the public transport stops functioning and your friend starts swearing, then do you know what you should do?*
> Children: *What is that?*
> Uncle Good-Advice: *Just pretend you cannot hear what he says. That you cannot hear.* (Miś 1980)

What is particularly telling is the pronouncement of the officer of the Citizens' Militia, who says: "the climate has been almost always against us", since these words do justice to the peculiarities of how nature is conceived in Poland – it is perceived as an obstacle to both life and work or even as a danger. It transpires that such judgements are most often encountered these days in the output of popular culture and – which is of special interest to us – in folk literature, and especially in Polish folktales, in which what was preserved is – as can be justifiably conjectured – the most ancient ways of conceiving the relationship between man and nature.[1]

The reason why the present paper deals with Polish tales is that one of their functions is to inform and to elucidate the situations and phenomena occurring in man's environment, including nature itself. And that is why, when it comes to fairy tales, the fact that fantastic threads are inextricably intertwined with references to real life is neither surprising nor untypical. However, before I go on to analyze Polish tales, let us note the below fragments of two Japanese folktales. The first one comes from Okinawa and runs as follows:

> *A long, long time ago, when God (*kamisama*) created the Yaeyama Islands, they were covered with rocks. So God decided he had to bring something else to the islands so they would look better. One day he called all the trees together. … To the first, the* fukugi *tree* [Garcinia *subelliptica* – M.L.]*, God said, 'You have a strong body and leaves, so you will live around houses and protect them from typhoons and fire.' … To the second, the pine tree, God said, 'You should grow around the villages and show off your big pine needles and protect the people from evil spirits and epidemic diseases.' … Then came the bamboo, … and* adan *tree* [*Pandanus odoratissimus* – M.L.]*. To them, God said, 'Bamboo, you will save drops of rain and keep them in the soil with your roots stretching wide. You will protect people from a landslide in heavy rains and from cracks in the earth during earthquakes. … Finally,* adan *tree, I will let you live on the seashore to protect the sand from big waves.'* (Endo 1995: 21–24)

And another example from Yamagata prefecture in Japan:

> *In ancient times, Oguni was surrounded by mountains where an enormous snake (*orochi*) and a crab (*ōgani*) appeared, and the latter cut off the former's tail. The enormous snake got angry, which sparked a duel between the two. Black clouds covered the sky, while the ferocity of the duel caused an earthquake…* (Yamagata 1960: 133)

The significance of these folktales lies in the fact that they contain references to the geographical location of Japan and to the dangers related thereto. This in turn means that their content abounds in the sensations that are fairly important for the Japanese society. In the former tale, we encounter an unusual case of comprehensive protection of man from dangerous natural phenomena.[2] In the latter one, on the other hand, we can observe the explanation of the cause of the occurrence of an earthquake. After all, typhoons, tsunamis, and deluges are rather frequent phenomena, and they are easily found in many parts of Japan (cf. Yamada 2016). It should also be noted that in the countries where natural phenomena hindering or even threatening daily human life occur, this fact is reflected in tales, legends, and myths. Depending on a culture, there may appear explanations to the effect that natural disasters stem from the influence of accidental forces (deities, animals, etc.) or that they constitute a punishment for bad or evil people's actions.

In the folk perception of nature – and there is nothing strange about it – nature is depicted as simultaneously good and evil or negative and positive.

Incidentally, we should add that the folk perception of nature also encompasses some cases in which nature is depicted as axiologically neutral. To put it more precisely, the said ambivalence – as opposed to myths, in which it figures much more conspicuously – assumes a rather peculiar form in folktales. What is thereby meant is that when it comes to folktales, there is either too little or too much of something therein. In other words, the sun, wind or rain are not bad in and of themselves. Quite the contrary, they might be even useful. But it is only too much sun (heat waves), too many gales (hurricanes) or torrential rains that do harm and pose a risk to man as well as imperil his crops or man's labor (e.g. fishing). We should also bear in mind that in various regions of Poland this situation might be different since where the above-mentioned phenomena occur in excess more frequently, they might be perceived as more negative. After all, these phenomena are fairly accurately documented in ethnographic literature (cf. Wróblewska 2002: 150–153).

THE PECULIARITIES OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF POLAND AND OF SOURCE MATERIALS

Before I proceed, I would like to take a pause to reflect on the issue – rather untypical of folklore studies – of geography and to consider what implications might follow therefrom, which could prove to be of interest from the point of view of the subject matter. Poland lies within one climatic zone and occupies a rather extensive area.[3] To appreciate the peculiarities of threats related to nature, it should be added that nature in Poland is not homogeneous: there is access to the sea, mountains, lakes, rivers, as well as deserts and dunes. Let us take a closer look at them and try to determine the essence of their respective dangers to man's health, life, and general well-being.[4]

- Sea: the Baltic Sea (Morze Bałtyckie). Types of threats: dangerous and starvation-related, e.g., storms, thunderstorms, drowning, shortage of fish, freezing, abrasion.
- Lakes: (Masuria – Mazury), Brodnickie Lake District (Pojezierze Brodnickie), Pomeranian Lake District (Pojezierze Pomorskie), Suwałki Lake District (Pojezierze Suwalskie), Greater Poland Lake District (Pojezierze Wielkopolskie), and a large number of single lakes and ponds. Types of threats: dangerous and starvation-related, e.g., storms, thunderstorms, drowning, shortage of fish, freezing.
- Bogs (whole of Poland) and marshes: Biebrza Marshes (Bagna Biebrzańskie) and small instances thereof across the whole of Poland. Type of threat: dangerous, e.g. drowning.
- Mountains: Świętokrzyskie Mountains (Góry Świętokrzystkie) and their ranges, Carpathian Mountains (Karpaty) and their ranges as well as the Sudetes (Sudety) and their ranges. Types of threats: dangerous and starvation-related, e.g., avalanches, snow and ice, thunderstorms, cold, earthquakes.
- Deserts and dunes: Błędów Desert (Pustynia Błędowska), Kozłowska Desert (Pustynia Kozłowska), Siedlecka Desert (Pustynia Siedlecka), the Moving Dunes near Łeba (Ruchome wydmy koło Łeby), Baltic Sea shore dunes, inland dunes. Type of threat: dangerous, e.g., wind, backfilling by sand.
- Other parts of Poland. Type of threat: dangerous and starvation-related, e.g., windstorms, droughts, downpours, rock bursts, thunderstorms, blizzards, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes.

Keeping Japanese folktales and the above information in mind, it could seem that in Poland we should also find many instances of the folktales alluding to atmospheric phenomena as being dangerous to life and limb. However, it transpires that the actual situation is diametrically different from this expectation, and it is hard to point to robust and clear examples.[5] Uncovering natural-phenomena-related threads in Polish tales is not easy and requires caution as well as making use of appropriate analytical instruments. It is mainly due to the fact that the threads are rather cursory or – as we might hastily conjecture – they serve as a rhetoric means of making the plot more attractive. However, this does not imply that there are no cases in which the threads related to inanimate nature and atmospheric phenomena occur directly. Still, they are a rarity and this fact is interesting it itself and calls for a separate study.

Let us note that what occurs more frequently than the threads related to natural disasters are hints of atmospheric phenomena, which to a large extent play the role of the background for the unfolding events. The said background is quite peculiar for it serves to embellish the plot, to highlight the protagonists' emotions or fear. The instances of this type are easily found in numerous folktales in various regions of Poland. In the tale from Podhale (the region of the Tatra Mountains), "O Marysi 'Dalekiej'" (About Mary the 'Distant'), Kazimierz Tetmajer expressed the protagonist's sadness in the following manner:

> *But once a downpour came, there came cloudy, gloomy autumn-approaching days, the snow was scattered over the hill, then the fog fell, the valleys got shrouded in darkness: his soul almost dripped off out of sorrow.* (Tetmajer 1987: 90).

And further:

> *Finally, he sat at a spruce, it was all dark above the forest, and the snow was scattering sort of raindrops all around and the mountains were covered in fog.* (ibid.: 94)

In the tale "Zbójecka chałupa" (The Robber's Cottage), also originating from Podhale, the depiction of a shop robbery is preceded by the following description:

> *Once upon a time, at the beginning of November, a horrendous gale, raging for three days and over two nights wreaked havoc in the Tatra Mountains so that at some places the whole hillside was covered with fallen spruces, … Then came the rain, then snow, and towards the end of November, it suddenly turned freezing cold.* (ibid.: 62)

On the other hand, in the Kashubian (a region of the Pomerania) tale "Krośnięta i rybacy [Krôsnięta a rëbôcë]" (Krośnięta and Fishermen), we can read about "krośnięta" (a dwarf in Kashubian folktales; cf. Sychta 1968: 236–238) who abducts fishermen's children under rather peculiar circumstances:

> *Stealthily, once the night spread its black wings, when through the clouds a silver moon beamed pervasively, while the sea was peacefully rocking its waters, they started leaving their houses only to lurk around these cottages in which they knew that it was exactly in them that there were fishermen's infants. They took those infants with themselves and in place of them they put their own children.* (Samp 1985: 95)

In the short Kashubian tale "Dąb i trzcina [Dąb ë strzëna]" (Oak and Cane), the description of the tragic fate of an oak tree is preceded by the following: "Suddenly a ferocious storm broke out" (Samp 1985: 20).

Furthermore, in the Kashubian tale "Adon z Dziwnowa" (Adon from Dziwnow), while towing a whale through the sea, a storm broke out, which – once personified – was labelled by the protagonists as "purtek" (a devil or demon in Kashubian folktales, cf. Sychta 1970: 227; Dźwigoł 2004: 113):

> *The storm was brought about by a frontal cloud, bolts and storms will be coming for the forthcoming three days. Then a violent storm will come and things will get even worse.* (Necel 2012: 25)

In the region of Greater Poland (in the neighborhood of Poznań city), in the tale "Madejowe łoże" (Madej's bed), the protagonist on his way to hell encounters "the sound of empyreal, breakers, scary whistling of winds, horrendous crash as if millwheels were rotating, a crack of flames" (Kapełuś & Krzyżanowski 1957: 240).

In the village of Łęczyn, close to the town of Urzędów, a tale originates about the devil carrying a man, which is accompanied by the occurrence of a gale:

> *Cocks are only crowing, but I went outside and there – he says – such a gale, such a gale – he says – is howling. I got scared, how come such a gale? I take a look – he says – and here I see the devil carrying a man…* (Michalec & Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2019: 88)

In the tales originating from Masuria and containing a daemonic thread, the moment of the appearance of a "kłobuk" (a demon according to Slavic folk beliefs) in a cottage is accompanied by a rainy season: "One year, it was raining heavily,

for the whole week on end it was pouring down with rain until vermin started to die" (Koneczna & Pomianowska 1956: 66).

The last example is as follows: in the tale originating from Opole Silesia (Śląsk Opolski) "O trzech braciach z Opola" (About Three Brothers from Opole) the depiction of an "utopiec" (water demon in Slavic mythology) waking up in the River Oder is accompanied with the following description:

> *From the mountain of Ślęża, the gales drove a severe storm all the way to Opole. The sky went darker due to violet and pale clouds, whilst the River Oder on this horrific day suddenly turned gray and murky, … The sky was permeated by lightnings which severed the thick darkness like golden swords.* (Dobkiewiczowa 1963: 5)

On the basis of the materials cited above, one may come to believe that the motifs connected with nature are rather easy to decipher and apart from some aesthetic value they do not contribute anything particular to illuminate the relationship between man and nature. However, there is more to these motifs than just one option of making use of them. What is more, they may (and they do) serve different meanings and purposes.

FOLKTALES ABOUT SCARY NATURE AND THEIR PECULIARITIES

A distinctive feature of Polish tales is the fact of attributing to inanimate nature – and mainly to atmospheric phenomena – the property of being dangerous to man's life and health or to his environment. The reasons for this situation can be sought for beyond the scripts of tales, the sources of which are found – depending on the region of Poland – in the proliferated modes (not only the folk mode) of understanding reality. These in turn comprise mainly the threads stemming from Catholicism – especially in its folk aspect – as well as from local reminders and Slavic beliefs. The foundations of this worldview are rather loose references to the Old and New Testament, the Apocrypha, oracles (e.g. *Księgi sibiliańskie* (Sibylline Books)) and oral stories (cf. Zowczak 2000: 7; Grzeszczak 2018; Michalda 2009; Nowa Sybilla 1913). It should be added that an important constituent of these convictions is being based upon the belief that the world is susceptible to the workings of two forces: a good and an evil one, both of them having participated (and still doing so) in its creation as well as in daily events (also at the individual level; cf. Szyjewski 2003: 29). As a result of this sort of

understanding, amongst the current inhabitants of the area of Poland, what was (and still is) dangerous to them was inextricably connected with evil forces: devils, daemons, and other entities (cf. Dźwigoł 2004: 8). That is why people equated everything that was hostile (or even dangerous) to them with nature, thus somehow implying that they were not a part of the latter. In other words, man is isolated from nature, which proves to be dangerous to him. Man does not constitute a part of nature in the sense that he does not feel as if he is nature's integral part, whilst accepting the natural phenomena as they actually occur. He comes to terms with deluges, storms, and earthquakes, regarding them as indispensable elements of his surroundings.

As a result, one may adopt a three-fold understanding of nature as being evil (or dangerous). First of all, it is evil in itself. In other words, it is always dangerous to man's life and limb as well as to his well-being. In the collective consciousness of the inhabitants of Poland (and this applies across many regions), what appear to be the most frightening (unfavorable) are – among others – wind, rain, storm, and rainbow (cf. Bartmiński & Szadura 2012; Smyk 2018: 316). By way of an example, we can point to the following tale about a gale:

> *Not all the phenomena brought to existence by Jesus are congenial to human beings. People do not tolerate a gale. They get frightened when they feel it. They run away from it and swear at it. They even throw knives at it, and all this is due to the fact that they recognize a gale by its damaging powers but they do not know how it looks like. And a gale in its turn, due to the fact that it is invisible, is so angry at Jesus that it uproots trees, blows away roofs of people's houses and carries them to some other locations, and it does all that harm out of sheer malice.* (Simonides 2010: 30)[6]

And the following illustrates some harmful effects of the rainbow:

> *Earlier on, people used to believe that a rainbow emerged so as to suck in the water remaining after either a storm or rain. Yet, the rainbow stuck to water as a mushroom to a leave and it kept drinking that water even when storms or rains were gone. … Because when there was a drought and people were waiting for water, and there was just a mere drizzle, the rainbow entered a lake and from it collected water up to the sky.* (Simonides 2010: 30)[7]

An interesting example is provided by a tale related to an earthquake:[8]

> *Earth is normally rather stable, only exceptionally it may collapse and even if it does, it applies exclusively to the soil of graveyards and only on tombstones so that coffins cannot reach the sky. It was believed that earth is founded upon one pillar or is supported by some animate being such as a bullock, buffalo, dragon or others. If that creature ever moves, then an earthquake takes place.* (Simonides 2010: 37)

In the region of Pomerania tales circulate about a sea daemon referred to as "szolińc" ("szalińc"; cf. Sychta 1972a: 215–216), which is responsible for causing gales:

Gale szalińc *– a player above all the players*
Grabs the devilish fiddle
Jumping over Hel's[9] *dunes*
Shrouded in a dusty cloud of sand,
Willing to antagonize everybody
As bad as purtk*, as envious as* smantek[10]
(Fenikowski 1978: 52)

In the region of Opole Silesia, we may encounter numerous tales about water demons labelled as "utopiec", which stymie human life, e.g.:

> *The water in the river was clear so life evolved therein. The most important inhabitants of the river were* utopiecs*. These were water-inhabiting creatures sort of resembling nymphs. What characterized them was the fact that once somebody in the evening rambled along the riverbank, they pulled them underwater.* (Simonides 1977: 131)

The above is slightly differently preserved in Silesian tales related to demons inhabiting coal mines:

> *Once upon a time in the mines of silver and zinc ore, there lived ghost Szarlej. That was an evil ghost lurking for the lives of gwarks – currently referred to as miners; he did harm to them, that is, he swamped the drifts, plucked boulders off the ceiling and knocked them over so that they would fall on the miners, flooded mine tunnels with water, exuded poisonous 'earthly odors', that is, gases; in other words – there were many bad things to be said about him. Eventually, he flooded coal mines and zinc ores and moved to some other place – God knows where.* (Morcinek 1984: 58)

The region of Pomerania is no worse in this respect. In the Kashubian tale, there appears a thread of "Klabaternik" (or "Klabiternik")[11] presaging the doom to the sailors at sea:

> *Here they encountered the southwest storm. They passed by the island, but the storm grew in intensity. Somebody noticed an infant at the front mast. The captain said it was* Klabaternik *and it presaged that the ship would sink. … The captain quickly approached the front of the mast and drew a hidden shoe and knocked it against the wiry rope. The infant turned into a man in a dark blue attire. The storm hit once again with its dying-down vehemence and the said man disappeared and silence prevailed again.* (Necel 2012: 141)[12]

This sort of cases in their pure form are encountered least frequently. We might also venture a hypothesis that they are mainly preserved in oral form.

Upon another understanding, nature is ambivalent. This in turn means that it might be good (favorable) but it may also become evil (unfavorable). In this case, it is difficult to say why this happens to be so and what may trigger danger. What is illustrative of the above is an excerpt from the tale by Maria Konopnicka, "O krasnoludkach i o sierotce Marysi" (On Dwarves and a Little Orphan Girl Mary), dating back to 1896, with the said excerpt pertaining to the actions of Queen Tatra (Królowa Tatra). To put it sharply, what is meant is what follows:

> *And suddenly a bang pierced the air as if a hundred thunderbolts hit and the choir of the spruce forest became audible, with the choir – while playing its black harps – singing forcefully what follows:*
> *– Queen Tatra is formidable and inspires awe. Her head is lifted high above the earth. The crown of ice embellishes her temples – the curtain of snows drips down her neck, the cloth of pale fog covers her silhouette. Her gloomy and vindictive eyes throw thunderbolts, her voice is a bang of streams and of thunders of storms. Her anger ignites lightnings and crashes forests, her bed – clothed with black clouds – does not provide any sleep to anybody, her feet mash each flower and all the grass… Her stone-cold heart is never moved by anything. Queen Tatra is formidable and inspires awe. Yet, once the echoes died, another choir became audible, playing a song on silver lutes. This choir in turn sang as follows:*
> *– Queen Tatra is good and merciful. She weaves thin fogs, she covers the nakedness of the mountains, she makes garlands out of mugo pine and puts them on their foreheads. She turns dead snows into clear streams,*

> *she waters fields and lowlands so that they could yield the crops of bread. She provides shelter to their eagles and rocks their featherless nestlings in high nests. She gives shelter to a rupicapra in her chambers and protects it from hunters. She marvels at the valleys with her sweet eyes and protects a flower therein from scorching heat. She weaves wonderful wall hangings out of velvet moss and lays them at the bottom of her secret abysses. She feeds poor people, who are not endowed with either fields or cereals, and she teaches the children from highlanders' cottages to marvel at the sky where she resides. Queen Tatra is good and merciful!* (Konopnicka 1958: 141)

In Kashubian tales there is a god of sea called Gosk (cf. Samp 1987: 39), which is also marked with the ambivalence in its actions:

> *Long long time ago, the only master of the Baltic Sea was God Gosk – the god inhabiting a palace at the bottom of the sea. When he was resting, the sea was calm and no waves roiled its surface. When he was walking around his property, a cool breeze was blowing into the sails of fishermen's boats. However, sometimes Gosk had a tantrum. Then a storm stirred the sea, ominous waves started hitting against the shores and all the adventurers who did not manage to return to their homes from their sea voyages in time, got lost in the sea abyss.* (Bursztyn n.d.)

Quite similarly to the previous case, it is difficult to point to pure motifs which would demonstrate the ambivalence of nature. This is mainly due to Christian influences, which affected both the character of the tale and its message.[13]

The third case is related to the kind of tales in which nature is dangerous (evil) but only as a punishment for a violation of faith or principles as well as for wronging other people. What neatly illustrates the above is the following short tale:

> [A girl on her way to church spots an elderly man sitting on a stone] *And that was Wind itself.* [The girl passes him without even greeting him, for which the latter decides to make the girl feel ashamed one day. Then the girl leaves the church]*, and then, an unexpected sudden gust of wind was so strong that it lifted her dress and shirt all the way up to her head…; and only then did she realize that it was due to the elderly man's agency. And this is how Wind made the girl ashamed.* (Bartmiński & Bączkowska & Prorok 2012: 334)[14]

We can also point to the following tales as a telling instance of the combination of prior beliefs with Christianity:

> *Our mother told us that evil resides in storms. What accounts for it is the fact that when earthly evil masses, it finally starts moving upwards. And then, for it not to reach the sky – because only good resides there – it hides in clouds. And when evil excessively masses therein, it must explode. It usually explodes when people quarrel, are in conflict and have fierce arguments. This somehow affects clouds. And they in turn throw their thunderbolts which target people – and not accidental people but the ones which engender evil themselves.* (Simonides 2010: 28)[15]

Another interesting instance of older – most likely Slavic – beliefs being supplemented with a Christian thread are folktales about lightning-ignited fire, for example:

> *Before, one did not want to extinguish lightning-ignited fires because it is morally wrong for people to oppose God's will. Similar fires were only to be extinguished with milk.* (Simonides 2010: 29)

There is another tale – originating from the neighborhood of the town of Opoczno and being representative of the type of understanding under consideration – "Baranek na bagnach" (A Lamb in the Swamps), which is about drowning drunk men in the swamps as a form of punishment. It reads as follows:

> *A peasant was coming back from a fair in the town to his cottage. He was drunk as a lord. The whole pavement belonged to him. Nay, he was even bumping into trees and bushes. The peasant spotted an about-half-a-year-old lamb, … One should not let it free. … Upon reflection, he took to chasing this creature. … But the lamb was cunning, it got itself almost straight into the chaser's hands and legs and thus lured him into the swamps … The peasant is chasing after the lamb on and on and …bang! …into the swamps!* (Wojewódzki 1974: 47)

A similar thread – the appearance of an intermediary in the enforcement of a punishment – can be found in the Kashubian tale, "W wąwozie szczęścia" (In the Gorge of Happiness), which tells about a punishment exacted by a "purtek":

> *Before the mother managed to forestall his actions, he had jumped into a tall rock towering over a shore. The veins got swollen on his forehead,*

> *and the eternal boulder started wobbling and it eventually fell down the abyss with a bang…*
> *Son – said the mother fearfully – you should not have tampered with that rock, perhaps you thereby infuriated a* purtek *who was residing on it. Now we will take his vengeance on you … It was Trella, the master of these lands and lakes.*
> *– Uh huh, got you, adventurer! Now you will not escape me – he shouted.*
> *– It was you who threw into the lake the rock on which I lay … And you will answer for it.* (Necel 2012: 40–41)

Furthermore, a typical Christian thread is found in the fairy tale about a battle against Christianity waged by a nobleman called Boruta,[16] who got punished by a strike of lightning:

> *In Kuyavia there lived quite a knight, Boruta. … He did not want to pay homage to anyone: neither to God, nor to the king. … He was in an open conflict with the bishop and a monk. … The clergy and Christian people were consumed with fear, while Boruta was relentlessly on the rampage, threatening not only Kuyavia, but also moving far beyond Płock, … Devilish forces were his allies. … However, the devils, even if they wanted, were powerless to do anything, … And when he was galloping around Łęczyca, his anger turned into insane hotheadedness. … Suddenly, the sky went darker and the bolt hit Boruta straight into his heart. He spread his hands and dropped dead spiritless.* (Bunikiewicz 1989: 351–356)[17]

A similar tone manifests itself in the tale on the destruction of the city of Hel, which originates from the region of Pomerania:

> *On a parcel of sandy land reaching far into the sea, with the land being surrounded by the waves of the Baltic Sea from three sides, where nowadays grow miserable pine trees and in autumn moors turn pink, many centuries ago there stood a formidable and rich city called Hel. … However, after some time people inhabiting Hel began to change … From then onwards, idleness prevailed in Hel. … The poor were forgotten. God looked down on it and frowned angrily. And then the sky got covered by clouds and the resultant darkness descended onto earth and sea so that the inhabitants of Hel thought that the Last Judgement was close. … That is why, each successive day, fewer fish were caught in nets so that it made no sense to set out on a voyage to the sea on a fish cutter!* (Rabska 1925: 12)

Let us take heed of the fact that a distinctive feature of the tales of this type is that there is an intermediary therein, that is somebody or something leading man – as a form of punishment – to a certain spot, for example, a lake or swamps in order to deprive him of life or health. In some cases, the intermediary imposes on people a punishment in the form of wind or lightning, which leads to the deprivation of people's property. Usually, depending on the region, the entity that counts as an intermediary is the devil (*diabeł*), "purtek", an imp (*chochlik*), an animal, Skarbnik (a mine ghost occurring in the tales from the region of Upper Silesia, cf. Martin 2005) or Ghost of the Karkonosze (a part of the Sudetes) Mountains (or Liczyrzepa; cf. Jech 2008). I would like to emphasize that the tales of the third type occur most frequently in Polish folktales across all its regions.

A separate issue related to the above-mentioned three understandings of the dangers from nature lurking for man is a contention that it is possible to take counteraction and preventive measures against them. To illustrate this, I may point to an excerpt of another version of the tale from Pomerania about the city of Hel and the process of abrasion and the protection therefrom:

> *One day, the wind started blowing eastwards for a change and it kept blowing for several days on end. The waves were eroding Hel while pruning it. Fishermen were petrified and started building a dyke. However, one night such a violent storm hit that Hel's shore started to gradually disappear, … The storm was ceaseless, … The dwellers of Hel were very hard-working and given the fact that the island was well equipped with necessary raw materials, they started to build dykes in Hel anew. After several years, a new church was erected, which was bigger than the previous one and additionally made of brick. … Surprisingly enough, after some time, the fishermen found on the shore a golden statue of the Virgin Mary and brought it all the way over to Hel's church. From then onwards, they believe her to be the queen of fishermen and of the Polish shore … so that she takes care of them during storms…* (Necel 2012: 56)

A separate example is the tale originating from the Ogonowice village, situated in Lower Silesia, which is concerned with the fear of storm and with the belief that it is a confession that shall provide the protection from lightnings:

> *– If a lightning hit us, we shall die without a confession. The confession would come in handy. What a pity, a priest is missing, but we may confess our sins to one another. … The woman crossed herself and started confessing. …*

– Keep confessing, keep confessing, or otherwise a lightning may hit you!
(Wojewódzki 1974: 102)

These actions are mainly based on magical thinking that it is possible to influence God's or a daemon's decisions or even an atmospheric phenomenon identified with evil powers. To this end, in folktales, one engages in counteracting magical practice such as spells, gifts, erecting churches, as well as prayers of supplication and making good deeds, with the latter group of preventing measures having more or less the same function. Yet another action taken in order to neutralize ominous atmospheric phenomena was, for example, throwing a knife against the wind (cf. Simonides 2010: 30). Let us also pay attention to the fact that in Polish folktales magical thinking marked with the fear of forces of nature is still proliferating.

THE METAPHOR OF FEAR IN POLISH FOLKTALES AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Julian Krzyżanowski (1892–1976), a Polish researcher and classificationist of folktales, wrote that "taming nature means making oneself its part, entering its rhythm, and coming to terms with what flows therein, including what is dangerous about it" (cf. Krzyżanowski 1980: 65). In this part of the paper, I shall endeavor to justify my claim that in fact the truth is just the opposite. Namely, Polish fairy tales do not talk about taming the nature but affirm man's separation from what threatens him. In other words, the contents of Polish tales do not evince the process of taming nature, nor of making man its integral part.[18] Firstly, one of the most important functions of tales is to illuminate the causes of a given phenomenon (let us add that an explanation is never complete but always valid only to a certain extent).[19] Secondly, taming is the process leading up not to understanding somebody or something, but rather to achieving the state of subordination, subjugating somebody or something to us (or conversely: subjugating us to somebody or something). That is why we can justifiably claim that Polish tales do not include the process of taming, let alone making man a part of nature. Instead, they rather preserve the state of separation by trying to explain relevant causes. Nor – it should be added – is the use of nature-related threads reducible to mere rhetoric devices.

Let us take a closer look at the descriptions of inanimate nature and atmospheric phenomena, and let us try to reconstruct the way present-day Polish inhabitants relate to them. What shall prove handy for uncovering the said

content is the investigations on metaphors employed in cognitive linguistics, especially the book by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). The significance of this work reduces to the fact – which is going to be of some aid to the investigations to follow – that it justifies the link between a metaphor and thinking as well as acting (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 25). In order to put the thought more explicitly, let us resort to an excerpt from an Egyptian tale: "One day, when Prince Hasan was strolling about and his turban was flapping in the wind almost like a banner…" (Bushnaq 2013: 86).

Let us note that in the above fragment, wind proves to be wind and nothing else.[20] By contrast, the authors (or narrators) in Polish folktales, while trying to characterize nature, make ample references to fear, to instilling the sense of danger and peril, or – to a lesser extent – to the feeling of discomfort and burden. In other words, the atmospheric phenomena appearing in Polish folktales, such as wind, storm, or winter are not only wind, storm, or winter, respectively. Rather, they are a "horrific wind", "terrifying storm", and "harsh winter".

It transpires that wind *qua* wind is not so emotionally charged as when one assigns an ontological status thereto. Let us scrutinize this issue based on two instances of folktales originating from Kuyavia as well as from Pomerania and the Masurian Lake District, with one tale per region:

> *Already the silent wind is carrying a lovely song.* (Dunin-Karwicka 2012: 124)

> *The sun is walking low, slightly above the Kuyavian land.* (Dunin-Karwicka 2012: 124)

> *It was only when the sun had set that he set foot on some land.* (Necel 2012: 97–98)

> *And suddenly it went dark, the thick cloud came and the chest with gold disappeared.* (Koneczna & Pomianowska 1956: 54)

Based on the above-cited examples, we can see that the atmospheric phenomena and inanimate nature were assigned the status of a "being", thus granting them the status of independently acting "entities", that is, the ones having some internal (or external) goal. This is evidenced by the underlined phrases in the quotes above; the phrases imply that wind, sun or cloud might move independently and take other actions. As a result, they might make evaluative judgements and act according to their respective principles. What is more, we can ascribe some sort of "personhood" to wind and clouds. For that reason,

generally speaking, nature purposefully and independently of man's will intervenes into the latter's life.

While analyzing the content of Polish tales and resorting to theories of cognitive linguistics, we may distinguish one fundamental metaphor, which is the metaphor of fear. In its weaker form, it refers to a sense of danger or discomfort. Let us scrutinize the examples below:[21]

> *Half a year ago, on 9 January, the Rozewie coast and Hel Peninsula were hit by a violent hurricane from the north. And then, malicious waves eroded the side of the Rozewie bank, which in summer started to fleck off gradually.* (Necel 2012: 34–35)

> *Thunderbolts were striking so that the earth was shattering.* (ibid.: 37)

> *He prayed passionately in Jastarnia's church for winter to finally retreat from the entire Polish coast, …. However, the winter was harsh so that it could not even get eradicated with an axe.* (ibid.: 59)

> *The water must have suddenly come up and collected them.* (ibid.: 68)

> *And soon early spring came. Enormous snowstorms were moving from the north into a slightly heated land. The snowstorms overshadowed the whole world. Lumps of snow set themselves on the icy surface. After some time, the ice began to break, and the wind kept howling from the north towards the shore.* (Necel 1975: 23)

> *Once the weather turned favorable, they set out on a further journey.* (Necel 2012: 29)

> *It was in summer. The weather was beautiful. A cloud came out. It carried a storm with itself. The lightning began to strike!* (Wojewódzki 1974: 102)

Employing the metaphor of fear was supposed to serve not only as a rhetoric device, embellishment or to render the message more explicit. It was meant to preserve a sense of danger, with the danger emanating from Nature itself. The incessant reiteration of the phrases such as "thunderbolts started striking", "thunderbolts were striking", "the wind kept howling", "a violent hurricane attacked", "malicious waves eroded", "the water must have suddenly come up and collected them", "the winter was harsh", "the snowstorms overshadowed", reinforce among the local recipients thereof the feeling that particular atmospheric

phenomena are threatening, dangerous, and hampering life, labor, and land cultivation. All this put together only strengthens the claim that man is not a part of nature, and the former must act in such a manner as to avoid the dangers stemming from the latter. Nature – mainly inanimate nature but also atmospheric phenomena comprising nature – occupies a very important place in the Polish folk culture because the economic foundations of this culture were reduced to land cultivation and are contingent upon natural environment conditions (Bartmiński & Szadura 2012: 25). However, they become cultural phenomena and thus operate based on diametrically different principles and represent entirely different senses for the participants in the folk culture in Poland (cf. Hajduk-Nijakowska 2005: 16). As we can see, this very proliferation of folk visions of the separation of man from nature and of magical thinking leads neither to its understanding nor its taming as posited by Krzyżanowski (1980).

CONCLUSION

In the introductory part of the paper, I invoked a fragment from the Polish film *Miś* in which, as was mentioned, Uncle Good-Advice accidentally expressed, culturally speaking, a very significant message: "the climate has been almost always against us". These words neatly fit the "man versus nature" pattern. In other words, man is not considered part of nature and as such he is threatened with peril and other discomforts inflicted by the latter. Thus, he is forced to assume offensive (or defensive) postures, which are determined by cultural forms of magical thinking. Let us add that the relation between man and nature understood this way was subject – in various periods in which Polish folk culture assumed different shapes – to many influences, eventually assuming the form of a hybrid of local threads (usually originating from Slavic beliefs) and the Christian conception of punishment and reward in terms of what is permissible and what is prohibited. Polish tales, as an important part of folk literature, performed an important function of not only familiarizing the reader with the pictures of reality but, above all, they were supposed to disseminate rather specific behavioral patterns. And it is in this sense that tales proved to be an interesting research subject considered in the present paper.

NOTES

[1] Let us note that, for obvious reasons, they are not pure but in the course of various social and cultural transformations the new threads were added thereto.

[2] It is also related to the issue of overcoming trauma resulting from natural disasters such as deluges, hurricanes, etc., as a result of which people die and their respective property gets lost (cf. Hajduk-Nijakowska 2005). An example of overcoming trauma, which has no equivalent in Poland, is provided by, say, the Japanese tale *Kibō-no oka. Sen'nensei-no kimi e* (The Hill of Hope: Dedicated to You in the Next Millennium) (cf. Shōji 2014) concerning trauma resulting from the tragedy after tsunami which hit Tohoku on 11 March 2011.

[3] The territory of Poland is 312,696 km^2 and its climate is moderate.

[4] Threats are constant, i.e., they do not change their nature in different regions of Poland.

[5] Nor is it reflected in the typologies of tales (cf. Krzyżanowski 1962, 1963, 1980: 41). This situation by itself is interesting and it constitutes an issue calling for a separate study. This issue, however, unfortunately remains unresolved here.

[6] Source and region unknown.

[7] Source and region unknown.

[8] This example is interesting inasmuch as earthquakes in Poland do not practically occur.

[9] Hel is a Polish town on the Hel Peninsula.

[10] *Smętek* (*smątk* or *smantek*) is a Kashubian malicious daemon (cf. Samp 1984: 20–47; Sychta 1972b: 95–96; Dźwigoł 2004: 110).

[11] Let us note that the Kashubian version of Kabaternik considerably differs from Klabautermann, the latter originating from German tales and marked with a negative character (cf. Petzoldt 2003: 109).

[12] A shoe in this tale is endowed with magical powers.

[13] Christian influences have changed the sense of the Slavic source. For this reason, it is impossible (or very difficult) to understand the meaning of Slavic myths and local beliefs.

[14] Source and region unknown.

[15] Source and region unknown.

[16] The name of a devil-nobleman from Polish legends.

[17] Region unknown.

[18] I do not exclude the possibility that such cases can occur. However, they are exceptionally rare.

[19] In Polish tales, many a time there are only references to the fact that such a phenomenon does occur. However, the justification thereof is still wanting.

[20] In this fairy tale, the wind has no reference to Egyptian mythology and the god of air and wind Shu (*šw*).

[21] All the examples, save the last one, come from the region of Pomerania. The last quote originates from a tale from the region of Lower Silesia.

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Marcin Lisiecki is a Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Poland. His main research areas include studies on nationalism in Japan and Poland, popular and folk culture in Japan, Japanese and Polish mythological studies.

marlis@umk.pl

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IN MEMORIAM

EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF PLAY IN AFRICAN CHILDREN'S GAMES

Kennedy C. Chinyowa
PhD, Griffith University, Australia
Tshwane University of Technology, Faculty of Arts & Design,
Department of Performing Arts, South Africa
chinyowakc@tut.ac.za

Abstract: The transformative power of indigenous African children's games can be demonstrated by how they were framed by the aesthetics of play such as imitation, imagination, make-believe, repetition, spontaneity, and improvisation. Such games could be regarded as 'rites of passage' for children's initiation into adulthood as they occupied a crucial phase in the process of growing up. Using the illustrative paradigm of indigenous children's games from the Shona-speaking peoples of Zimbabwe, this paper explores the transformative power of play as a means by which children engaged with reality. The paper proceeds to argue that the advent of modern agents of social change such as Christianity, formal education, urbanization, industrialization, scientific technology, and the cash economy not only created a fragmentation of African people's cultural past but also threatened the survival of African cultural performance traditions. Although indigenous African children's games were disrupted by modernity, they have managed to survive in a modified form.

Keywords: improvisation, indigenous children's games, mastery of reality, Shona tradition, transformative power of play

INTRODUCTION

Virginia Koste (1995) has argued that children's games are a rehearsal for life. Such games involve the selective observation of reality, developing into assimilation and absorption of the social data of life and then representing it in a new frame. Imitation becomes a playful way of studying life, a rehearsal of things known and an exploration of things yet to be known. In the ongoing attempt to master reality, African children's imitation combines with imagination to transform mud into a staple food, sticks into axes and spears, playmates into children and nothing into everything. It is that transformative power in play which Koste (1995) describes

as optimally conducive to learning, discovery, and innovation. Far from being a childish fantasy, child play becomes a bridge towards the mastery of reality.

Using examples of African indigenous children's games, drawn from among the Shona-speaking people of Zimbabwe, this paper explores the transformative power of play as a means by which children engage with reality. Through the playing house game, for instance, children enter the being and character of their mothers and fathers, and in the process they exercise their ability for spontaneity and improvisation on what it means to be a parent. Such play becomes a transformative agent for getting more and more familiar with parenthood. As Peter Slade (1954) once argued, the seriousness of children's play lies in the honest and sincere absorption of the players. Such an act of faith brings with it intense feelings of 'realness', at least from the children's own perspective.

The paper argues that African children's games are not mere child play, but rites of passage for children's initiation into adulthood. They occupy a crucial phase in the process of growing up. The major focus will be on the transformational power of such games as a rehearsal for adult life. The paper begins by demonstrating how children's games have been framed by the aesthetics of play such as imitation, imagination, make-believe, repetition, spontaneity, and improvisation. These discursive frames of play typify Huizinga's (1955) assertion that play draws from the deepest levels of being where transformations are made possible.

However, it will also be argued that the advent of modern agents of social change such as Christianity, formal education, urbanization, industrialization, scientific technology, and the cash economy not only created a fragmentation of the African people's cultural past but also threatened the survival of African cultural performance traditions. In the case of indigenous children's games, the paper ends by showing how they extended into the 'modern' period, but in a modified form. In terms of historical context, the paper regards the period before British colonization in the nineteenth century as the indigenous or precolonial period. The greater part of the period after British colonization in the twentieth century marks the 'modern' or colonial period up to 1980, when Zimbabwe gained its political independence from British colonization. Most of the source material for this paper was collected during the time of data collection for my doctoral study in Zimbabwe in 2002–2003 (see Chinyowa 2005). At that time, the living conditions for Shona children were not favourable due to the declining economic conditions in the country. The post-independence period in the country has been characterized by neo-colonial conditions that have worsened rather than improved the living conditions of Zimbabwean people, including children.

FRAMING REALITY THROUGH PLAY

The Shona-speaking people use the collective term *mutambo* to denote all cultural performance practices such as children's games, ritual ceremonies, storytelling, music, song, dance, drumming, and masquerade. *Mutambo,* in its linguistic copulative rendering readily translates into Gregory Bateson's 'this is play' (1972: 179), which has been regarded as the basis of play in both theory and practice. As the early play theorist Johan Huizinga (1955) once argued, play is not just an element of culture but culture itself bears the character of play. In fact, Huizinga (ibid.) went further to assert that cultures emerge and unfold *in* and *as* play. This places *mutambo* at the centre of Shona tradition as a processual element *of* and *in* culture.

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975 [1960]) regards play as a mode of aesthetic being, that is, society expresses itself through symbolic codes, idioms, and metaphors that combine to constitute people's cultural worldview. In other words, people define their spatial and temporal relationships in terms of symbolic expressions that have been shaped by culture. They *see*, *do,* and *feel* things in terms of a structured vocabulary provided for them by society. They are 'taught' by society 'how to do', 'how to see' and 'how to feel' according to certain cultural frames of reference. Thus, the symbolic patterning encountered in *mutambo* as cultural performance is part of its signifying elements. In Margaret Drewal's (1992) view, different modes of symbolic expression such as children's games, storytelling, oral poetry, and ritual ceremony are part of a performative strategy that places them squarely within the domain of play. In a way, play defines what happens to people in the process of creating, presenting, interpreting, and understanding their experience of the world.

More specifically, children's games are a form of playful activity through which children demonstrate their ability to create symbolic alternatives to reality. In his seminal book entitled *Homo Ludens* (1955), Johan Huizinga sums up what may be regarded as the basic features of play. In a rather lengthy description, Huizinga says:

> *Summing up the formal characteristics of play, we might call it a free activity standing consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious' but at the same time absorbing the players intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.* (1955:13)

Implicit in Huizinga's description of the characteristics of play are such aesthetic features as enjoyment, freedom, imagination, absorption (or flow), time, space, rules, secrecy, and disguise.

To elaborate further on some of these aesthetic features, Brian Sutton-Smith points out that the mood of play and its quality as an activity experienced through 'playfulness' (1997: 148) has the capacity to disrupt what people might have expected. Richard Schechner also notes that the fun of 'playing', that is, the doing and experiencing of playful activity, involves "going in over one's head, inverting accepted procedures and hierarchies" (1993: 26). Feelings of rapture, enthusiasm and elation often accompany the playful mood followed by mirth and relaxation. Gary Izzo (1997: 8) concludes that for the players, the only real motive for play seems to be in the sheer *enjoyment*. Paradoxically, it is the intense absorption arising from the fun and joy of playing that seems to wield the power to move the players to other states of being. Thus, the essence of play as fun, jest and enjoyment appears to provide players with an unusual access to a fundamental quality of creativity. As Izzo (1997) points out, when people grow into adulthood, they lose that creative ability to play because they learn judgment, denial, hate, and fear.

In the process of enjoyment, play frees the co-players from the world of familiarity. In Huizinga's view, "the first characteristic of play is that it is free, [it] is in fact freedom" (1955: 675–676). Play exists outside the boundaries of ordinary time and space. It creates a different order or frame of existence, which offers the players a sense of *freedom* from the constraints, limitations, and obligations of social reality. It is the freedom created within the play frame that provides an opportunity for the players to experiment and generate new symbolic worlds. It allows the players to experiment with new frames of existence in a climate in which they are free from the consequences of their actions. Don Handelman (1977) asserts that the attribute of freedom affords the players an opportunity to try out new forms of thought, feeling, and behaviour, which would never have been tried under normal circumstances. Freedom acts as a basis for altering the usual means of communicating messages by camouflaging itself in play.

Play may appear as a random and nonsensical activity, but if there is a feature that lends it order and beauty it is the *rules*. No wonder that one who breaks the rules of play is deemed a 'spoil sport'. For example, if a child picks up a stick and declares that 'this is a sword', other players need to agree and accept that it *is* a sword, and it remains so until the rules are changed by consensus. But if another player suggests that 'this sword has the power to heal dead people', it changes and *becomes* a healing sword. However, if a 'spoil sport' were to come and say, 'That's not a magic sword, it's only a stick', the immediate response would be, 'That's not fair'. The rules of play are momen-

tarily suspended, if not broken, and the play frame collapses. Thus, the rules of play are not only a significant feature but a 'social contract' that binds the players. Levi Vygotsky (1976) once asserted that play has rules that determine what holds its imaginary world together. If children are playing the roles of mothers and fathers, they have to observe the rules of maternal and paternal behaviour respectively.

Rules do not destroy the enjoyment and freedom of play because they are chosen and agreed upon by the players. Gavin Bolton (1984) notes that it is the submission to the rules that liberates the players to engage in spontaneous behaviour. Rules also act as constraints that enable the players to focus on the matter at hand, and, in the process, increase their imaginative capacities. Hence the rules of play tend to operate between the extremes of freedom and restraint, thereby creating a gap that affords the players an opportunity for *creativity*, *imagination, spontaneity,* and *reflection*. It is perhaps these qualities embedded within the rules of play that give it the semblance of order and stability. As Izzo has noted, "Into an imperfect world, play brings a sort of temporary, limited perfection" (1997: 11). The 'perfection' arises from the binding nature of the rules.

The rules of play are more binding when it comes to the respect or reverence accorded to the play *space*. The ancient Greek word for the play space, whether a physical or an imaginary stage, is *temenos*, meaning 'sacred circle'. "It is a sacred spot cut off and hedged in from the 'ordinary' world, a consecrated spot, a hallowed ground within which special rules obtain" (Izzo 1997: 9). The play space therefore is an aesthetic space set apart for and dedicated to the creation and performance of a play act. The 'magic' or 'sacred' nature of the play space is not necessarily a religious one, but a special regard accorded to it as a venerated and hallowed object, secured against defamation, violation or intrusion – a protected and inviolate space. Thus, whether in a classroom, courtroom, playfield, under a tree, on the altar or in the backyard, players respect and observe the rules of the *temenos*.

In African cultural performances, the idea of the *temenos* is closely associated with the cultural philosophy relating to the 'magic circle'. In both indigenous material and non-material culture, the circular shape manifested in the sculpture, architecture, eating habits, and performing arts symbolizes the people's sense of beauty, nurturance, growth, and community (see Seda 1998). In the case of the performing arts, for instance, the concept of the 'theatre-in-the-round' practised by many community theatre groups has been adapted from African curvilinear philosophy. During storytelling sessions, children often sit in a circular formation around the evening fire. The stories shared within that 'narrative space' are crucial to the children's socialization into the moral fabric of society. As Augusto Boal (1995: 20) points out, the 'aesthetic space'

possesses properties which stimulate knowledge, discovery, and recognition. As with enjoyment and freedom, the 'sacredness' of the play space allows the players to experiment with the burdens of reality in safety.

Gary Izzo (1997) also elaborates on the '*temenos* of the mind', the mental space that constitutes the *imagination.* Boal (1995) asserts that it is the 'aesthetic space' that liberates the imagination by making all combinations possible. In Boal's own words:

> *In the aesthetic space one can be without being. Dead people are alive, the past becomes present, the future is today, duration is dissociated from time, everything is possible in the here-and-now, fiction is pure reality, and reality is fiction*. (1995: 20)

Thus, as a feature of play, the aesthetic space gives birth to 'concrete dreams' (Boal 1995: 21) as the imagination makes the present non-existent. In other words, imagination animates play by endowing it with the quality of possibility, of imagining what might exist but is not yet present. If play is an activity set apart from the real context, imagination is the feature that engages with the fictional world by enabling play to create and bring forth alternative realities.

Another peculiar quality of play is how it promotes the formation of groups that share a sense of 'being apart' together. Such groups are distinguished by a tendency to *disguise* themselves and operate in *secrecy*. Izzo notes that the overriding feeling in these groups is that "[the] others outside (our group) don't concern us; we within this circle have our own special way" (1997: 13). To this end, the players may disguise themselves by means of a costume, mask, or other forms of 'dressing up'. The shroud of secrecy, coupled with the disguise, enables each player to play a different part, to become another being. In Julie Dunn's view (2002: 290), play creates shared dramatic worlds whose 'realness' is enhanced by elements of disguise such as costume and props.

The features of play, secrecy, and disguise enable the players to develop a bond of solidarity whose power may go beyond the duration of the play itself. Each playful experience serves to renew that bond, to draw the players even closer and create a strong sense of community. The total play experience, its enjoyment, freedom, sacred space, binding rules, imaginings, and disguises seem to combine to cement the relationships between and among the players. The bonds formed within the world of play, free from the suspicions, fears, and inhibitions of the outside world, are likely to be stronger than in ordinary life. The games and exercises that are part and parcel of playful activity are attempts to search for this shared bond of secrecy, disguise, and solidarity. As the saying goes, 'those that play together, stay together'.

CASE STUDIES OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN'S GAMES

Indigenous Shona children's games may be divided into genre categories, each of which serves its own educative role. These genre categories include *magure* (courtship games), *zvidobi* (love games), *jikinyira* (satiric games), *mahumbwe* (playhouse games) and *pfukumbwe* (memory games). Each of these games went a long way towards equipping the young with the social and cultural values of their society. Through the medium of play as an aesthetic category, children were initiated into the roles that they were to assume later on in adulthood.

Children's games were an oral performance art with a significance that went beyond mere pleasure and entertainment to involve the instruction and socialization of children into the community's philosophy of life. As children converged into the centre of the village from different neighbourhoods, they participated in playful activities that taught them the virtues of collective existence. Such a communal approach to life would ultimately influence children's future moral behaviour, social relationships, gender roles, cultural values, practices, and beliefs.

For instance, early courtship games called *magure* can be regarded as a preparatory stage in the crucial business of proposing love. The sense of admiration for a female partner was developed through the joyous experience of a courtship game. In children's games like *mwaramu woye* (my beloved one), *dzwitswi* (let me enter), *sarura wako* (choose your beloved one) and *zipotepote* (going round and round), young boys and girls were trained for what to look during courtship. For instance, when playing *zipotepote*, boys and girls would sit in a circle. The boys took turns to assume the leader's role and moved around the circle, touching each child's head as follows:

Leader: *Zipotepote* (Going round and round)
Chorus: *Zangariende* (Let it go round)
Leader: *Ndinotsvaga wangu* (I am looking for my beloved one)
Chorus: *Zangariende*
Leader: *Musuki wendiro* (The washer of plates)
Chorus: *Zangariende*
Leader: *Anodzichenesa* (Who can make them clean)
Chorus: *Zangariende*
Leader: *Kuti mbe mbe* (To be very clean)
Chorus: *Zangariende*
Leader: *Somwedzi wagara* (Like a new moon)
Chorus: *Zangariende*
Leader: *Iwe sara! Iwe simuka! Aiwa ndanga ndichireva uyu!*
(You remain! You stand up! No, I meant this one!)

Zipotepote encouraged boys to consider not only physical beauty when choosing a girl but also social attributes like cleanliness, politeness, generosity, and industriousness. If a boy made a wrong choice, he was laughed at by others as a way of aesthetic correction. In turn, girls were made aware of the qualities that were expected of an ideal wife. Honour and respect were given to those girls who could blend beauty with cleanliness and hard work. As a result of such early courtship games, children of the opposite sex grew up well accustomed to each other because they would be able to interact freely. Thus, games like *zipotepote* satisfied children's hunger for socialization and release from loneliness and anxiety. They afforded children the opportunity to socialize through play and, in the process, the insecurity and tensions created by the feeling of solitude were purged. As an early courtship game, *zipotepote* was not an end in itself but a means to a purposeful end.

Early courtship games were usually followed by more serious love games called *zvidobi* (delicacy), or *zvitorawatora* (pick your own choice). These games were played by more mature children whose ages ranged from twelve to fifteen years. Love games prepared such older boys and girls for married life by training them to choose an ideal partner and by allowing more intimate bodily contact. Such games included *tsikidzi muramu* (I have fleas, my dear), *karombo kari kumusana* (there is pain on my back), and *riri haye* (craving sensation). Although camouflaged in a theatrical performance, there were some implied sexual signals inscribed in the game. For instance, in *tsikidzi muramu,* a boy and a girl would sit in the middle of a group of children. The boy would act as if he was being bitten by fleas. The girl would scratch the boy's back to ease the pain. Meanwhile the other children would be singing and clapping their hands. The game was played as follows:

Leader: *Tsikidzi muramu* (There are fleas, my beloved one)
Chorus: *Kutsakadzika* (That is painful)
Leader: *Ndirare zvaramba* (I cannot sleep well)
Chorus: *Kutsakadzika*
Leader: *Hii-i muramu* (Oh, my beloved one)
Chorus: *Kutsakadzika*
Leader: *Ndikwenye muramu* (Scratch me, my beloved one)
Chorus: *Kutsakadzika*
Leader: *Ndiringe muramu* (Face this way, my beloved one)
Chorus: *Kutsakadzika*
Leader: *Hauonika muramu* (That's wonderful, my beloved one)
Chorus: *Kutsakadzika*

In this game, the word *tsikidzi* (fleas) was a metaphorical reference for imagined sexual desire. As such, the game created an opportunity for children to express hidden sexual feelings that could have remained suppressed. The game provided children with elementary lessons on sex education. As Aaron Hodza once pointed out (1984: 64):

> *Chinodzidzwa mumutambo uyu mabimbiri kana kuti kutamba nemukadzi mumba.*
> The lesson behind this game was sexual romance or playing with the wife in the bedroom.

Direct bodily contact between boys and girls was only permitted within the context of playing the game. It was regarded as taboo for boys to fondle girls outside the context of the games. This customary sanction was reinforced by derogatory names like *jengavakadzi* and *jengavarume,* which were ascribed to promiscuous boys and girls respectively.

As was the case with early courtship games, love games also created space for the release of pent-up feelings and emotions. The games produced a cathartic effect in the manner in which they helped to purge children's sexual fears, fantasies, and longings. The children could satisfy their sexual desires and anxieties through vicarious participation, thereby avoiding real sexual experimentation. These games could also be regarded as a substitute for actual lovemaking. As Coggin remarks, "Children's games could satisfy in fantasy the needs of an urgent instinctive kind which were deprived of satisfaction in actuality" (1956: 187). Therefore, love games helped to mediate children's understanding of love through what McFee calls "the education of the feelings" (1992: 159). Children's feelings and emotions were developed in such a way that they would be able to exercise self-control in sexual matters.

There were also satiric games called *jikinyira,* which were aimed at inculcating and upholding the moral guidelines of the community. These games could reinforce the established cultural practices on which the Shona society was based. Through satiric games, children learnt to guard against such unbecoming behaviour as excessive drunkenness, theft, deception, gossip, falsehood, waywardness, tricksterism, and other types of moral laxity. For example, in the game *Chinogodaro chiiko? (*What is the reason for this?*)*, a boy and a girl acting as husband and wife argue over the husband's intention to go to a beer party. The wife demands to accompany the husband because she suspects that he might be going to meet a lover. This game taught boys to shun negligent and irresponsible behaviour that results from excessive beer drinking. In another satiric game called *Ndiani akaba mamera?* (Who stole the sorghum?),

a woman called Matiyanika accuses another woman called Mai Muzavazi of having stolen her sorghum. Mai Muzavazi denies this vehemently and blames yet another woman, Mai Zimwaya. But Mai Zimwaya also denies the accusation and proceeds to blame Mai Mazhambe. The game goes on and on until all the accusations and counteraccusations result in a fight. This game taught children to guard against theft, deception, gossip, and falsehood. In traditional Shona society thieves were either made to pay back what they had stolen several times over or, if they failed, they would be banished from the community.

Satiric games taught children the essence of *unhu* (high moral integrity), without which a person would not be considered a complete human being. To have *unhu* was to possess desirable qualities of moral maturity, wholeness of character and personality. Hence, when the Shona people say, *ava munhu abve zera* (he or she is now a mature person), they will be referring to both physical maturity and moral uprightness. Satiric games also taught children the cultural principle in which the individual finds fulfilment. This communal principle is best summed up by Mbiti when he says, "I am because we are and, since we are, therefore I am" (1994: 113). In other words, the individual is what he or she is because of others. Individuals who lacked the sense of belonging to others were deemed to be a threat to the wellbeing of the community. They were therefore subjected to a satiric attack or social ostracism.

Perhaps the most prominent of traditional children's games were *matakanana* and *mahumbwe.* These may be considered as the equivalent of modern playing house games. *Matakanana* was a typical scenario in which four-to-six-year-old boys would mould clay toys such as cattle and huts or make spears and axes out of wood. On the other hand, girls would cook *sadza* (thick porridge) using soil as a substitute for mealie meal and make relish out of tree leaves. But from the age of seven to about fifteen years, children would engage in *mahumbwe* which was, and still is, a much more serious 'household' game than *matakanana*.

Mahumbwe was a more serious children's game that involved almost all the elements of theatrical performance. Children impersonated and enacted such family roles as father, mother, sons, daughters, and other members of the family. Apart from such role playing, *mahumbwe* was enacted on an open space as a substitute for the stage, and involved audience participation, improvised dialogue, dramatic spectacle, movement and gesture, mood and atmosphere, as well as props and costumes. The time when and the place where *mahumbwe* was performed were also quite appropriate to the occasion. The game was performed at the end of the harvest period when people were free to engage in leisure activities. Girls would collect crops that had been left over in the fields after harvesting. They would also perform other domestic chores that were expected

of women. Their mothers would provide them with household utensils like pots and plates. Boys played their part by erecting small huts on the ground, cut firewood, went out hunting for meat such as mice and locusts, and looked after security matters. Older boys and girls played the roles of husbands and wives while the young acted as children. When the husband returned from a hunting trip with meat, the wife would welcome him with jubilant ululation and chanting of clan praises. The wife might report errant children to the husband who would discharge discipline which could take the form of moral instruction. After eating the day's meal, the husband and wife would resign to their sleeping quarters, while children did the same.

However, there was to be no sexual intimacy between husband and wife. For this reason, those boys and girls who would have 'graduated' from *mahumbwe* could no longer participate in the game. A special 'graduation' ceremony called *nyenda* was held, to which parents were invited. The parents would be given real food prepared by the 'graduands', after which there was song and dance to celebrate the observed signs of maturity. Because they will have attained the age of puberty, the 'graduands' were now supposed to undergo the more serious rites of initiation into manhood and womanhood. Indeed, it was possible for partners of *mahumbwe* to become so closely attached that they could end up marrying. In such an eventuality, *mahumbwe* will have transformed from a mere simulation of reality into a rite of passage and entry into adolescence, and eventually adulthood.

Matakanana and mahumbwe laid a foundation for the future by preparing children for the adult life. They constituted a practical training in self-reliance, resourcefulness, discipline, and problem solving. As Gelfand has observed, through such games Shona children learned to create everything for themselves (1992 [1979]: 158). Girls learned to cook properly and to look after their children, while boys learned to fend for and construct shelter for the family. These games instilled a sense of individual and collective responsibility, of communal sharing and commitment to the family unit. For instance, the nature of gender patterning in *mahumbwe* may be likened to that of a complementary role relationship. Girls and boys learned to treat each other in relational rather than oppositional terms. The game instilled in each gender category the sense of mutual division of labour within the domestic space. Through play, both sexes not only acquired practical training in creativity, resourcefulness, and self-reliance, but also learned to dialogue with and relate to each other. The complementary sharing of power in managing resources and in decision-making indicated an equal contribution to the family as a unit of production. Hence *mahumbwe* prepared the girl-child for reciprocity of power and authority with the boy-child in future adulthood.

In essence, Shona children's games were a typical illustration of the transformational power of play, and the means by which children rehearsed for adult life. Far from being a childish fantasy, such play became a bridge towards children's mastery of reality. Peter Slade (1954: 48) has argued that the seriousness of children's play lies in the honest and sincere absorption of the players. Such an act of faith brings with it intense feelings of 'reality', at least from the children's point of view. In the case of *mahumbwe*, for instance, the game could reach such serious proportions that the players often ended up being partners for life. The transformations that appeared during moments of suspended disbelief were reminiscent of flow as a crucial element of play. Thus, children's games typify Huizinga's (1955) assertion that play draws from the deepest levels of being where transformations are made possible.

MODERN ADAPTATIONS OF CHILDREN'S GAMES

Traditional children's games as part of the African cultural heritage were not spared from the disruptive effects of the modern agents of social change. European settlers harboured myths that led them to regard Africans as a 'non-cultured' race, who were in need of a 'civilising mission' (Moodie 1975). Africans were viewed as having no tradition of drama or theatre or, if any existed, it was bound to copy from European art and culture (Plastow 1996: 74). Spurred on by these settler paternalistic notions, colonial cultural programmes were introduced in order to make Africans adopt Western values, norms, and beliefs (Kaarsholm 1990). The African people's perception of their own cultural forms was gradually transformed by persistent exposure to Western modes of entertainment, which were regarded as of a 'standard civilized type' (Kaarsholm 1990: 249).

As early as the mid-nineteenth century, European missionaries had already begun to set up mission schools throughout Zimbabwe. Indirectly, they were also paving the way for direct colonization of the country. Western Christianity was strongly opposed to the continuation of African rituals, ceremonies, and other cultural practices as these were a threat to missionary proselytization. The famous nineteenth-century missionary explorer, Robert Moffat, once referred to black Zimbabweans of that time as people who were "still living in Egyptian darkness and beastly degradation with everything in their political economy directly opposed to the will of God" (Zinyemba 1986: 17). Missionaries therefore preached not a modification of African ritual practices but their uprooting. They looked forward to the day when Western Christian values would permeate the African way of life. As a result of Western missionary influence, children's games were gradually replaced by Bible-based passion plays in missionary-

run primary and secondary schools. In order to purge Africans of what was considered as sinful pagan practices, and to exhort Africans to live morally upright lives, children were made to enact such Biblical tracts as "The Prodigal Son", "The Good Samaritan", "The Last Judgement", and "The Ten Virgins", to mention only a few. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o points out, it was Western cultural imperialism that curbed the free development of theatre traditions that were rooted in the ritual ceremonial practices of the African peasantry (1981: 81). In the process, indigenous children's games also lost their original appeal due to the increase of missionary-sponsored schools. To enhance Europe's 'civilizing mission', formal Western education was introduced in a way that made it appear as an instrument of alienating Africans from their culture. African children were consistently subjected to Western-oriented education, which compelled them to admire the culture of the colonizer and to stop believing in their names, their language, their cultural practices and, ultimately, in themselves. More emphasis was placed on reading English-language literature texts at the expense of African vernacular literature and language.

What used to be learnt through traditional children's games was now replaced by the school classroom, reading books, and playing Western games. These forces of modernity gradually distanced Shona children from their indigenous theatrical activities. Thus, traditional children's games were gradually relegated when the village empty space, where the games used to be played, was superseded by the school playground and community halls where children began to act out Western dramas like William Shakespeare's plays. The encroachment of urbanization, industrialization, and scientific technology also played a crucial role in the marginalization of traditional children's games. Children were suddenly exposed to alternative forms of entertainment such as films, radio, television, and, of late, computers. The growth and spread of manufacturing and retailing industries, the setting up of commercial farms and urban housing units compromised the importance of the village community. They gave rise to the migrant labour system that disrupted the existing cultural structures and social bonds (Kamrava 1993: 113). Apart from altering the prevailing communal system, these agents of modern change created a cultural shock and the undervaluing of indigenous norms, values, beliefs, and practices.

As children could no longer relate to the social and cultural worldview of the past, new games began to emerge in line with the more individualized modern sub-culture, much to the detriment of the communal sense of belonging. For instance, the idea of modern indoor games seems to encourage the spirit of individualism and to discourage the communal spirit that was instilled through traditional children's games. However, as Mbiti asserts:

> *Culture is a very complex phenomenon. Even if certain aspects of it die out, other aspects will survive and many of them will be changed or transformed to meet the needs of the changing times*. (1992 [1975]: 192)

Because culture embodies a people's ontological outlook passed on from generation to generation, it adapts to social change in its own way. Rather than remain static, culture continues to be constructed as men and women seek to expand their horizons of knowledge and understanding. It was the same case with traditional children's games as they tried to resist the effects of colonial marginality.

Most modern survivals of Shona cultural performances that are to be found in both rural and urban areas not only demonstrate the staying power of traditional African theatre but are also ample evidence of a collective longing for past modes of expressing a people's ideas, values, and beliefs (Chinyowa 1998: 12). Thus, to meet the challenges of modern change, some traditional children's games began to incorporate Western elements in both their form and content. For example, some love games like *zihachu hachu mwaramu woye* (I am craving for you, my dear) became *ndipewo bhasikoro pombi ndinayo* (give me a bike, the pump is here), *zipotepote* (going round and round) adapted some English words and became 'sport sport', and *sarura wako* (choose your beloved one) has close parallels with 'sweetie sweetie'. There were other new games that emerged to reflect colonial cultural hegemony by praising European legendary figures, chanting English choruses and verses. These include "Fish Fish", "Christopher Columbus", "Baa Baa Black Sheep", and "Tomato Sauce". But some indigenous games like *mahumbwe* (playing house), *paushamwari hwedu* (our close friendship), and *chihwande-hwande* (hide and seek) managed to resist colonial change and remained intact.

To an extent, Western cultural imperialism adversely affected African traditions during the colonial period by instilling a sense of false consciousness that caused children to become alienated from their cultural heritage. Children gradually lost touch with indigenous modes of cultural expression and socialization as they began to identify with agents of Western modernity. As David Masolo points out, under the colonial experience, African identity became subject to "valuational ambivalence" (1997: 285), that is, a state of ambiguity in which the individual's identity is divided between two different worlds. But due to the dynamism and staying power of culture, children began to adapt to the forces of colonial modernization. Indeed, some adaptations of traditional children's games are still being played to satisfy the desire for entertainment, socialization, and education. Thus, contemporary children's games are mainly creative adoptions and adaptations of past games that are linked to the process of integrating tradition with modernity.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown how indigenous African children's games went beyond mere childish play to act as rites of passage for children's initiation into adulthood. The paper demonstrates how the aesthetics of play framed such games to enable children to move towards a better mastering of reality. However, the advent of modern agents of social change such as Christianity, formal education, urbanization, industrialization, scientific technology, and the cash economy disrupted the African people's cultural past and threatened the survival of indigenous cultural performance traditions. African children's games resisted the adverse effects of 'modern' forces of change through the process of adoption and adaptation as a survival strategy.

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Kennedy C. Chinyowa (1954–2021) was a visiting scholar in the Centre for Applied Theatre Research at Griffith University where he obtained his PhD degree. He subsequently taught at several universities including the University of Zimbabwe, Griffith University (Australia), University of KwaZulu-Natal, and Tshwane University of Technology (South Africa). He obtained a permanent position as Head of the Division of Dramatic Art and Senior Lecturer in Applied Drama and Theatre at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, and in 2014 was appointed as professor at the Tshwane University of Technology.

Apart from winning numerous research awards and presenting several conference papers and workshops, he published widely in books and international refereed journals, such as *Research in Drama Education* (UK), *Studies in Theatre and Performance* (UK), *Drama Australia (NADIE) Journal*, and the *South African Theatre Journal*.

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE ANNUAL YOUNG RESEARCHERS' CONFERENCE "YOUNG VOICES" 2021

The Young Voices conference is an annual event held in Tartu in spring every year. It is meant for young researchers of all levels of education, including doctoral, undergraduate, graduate, and high school students, whose research interests lie in a broad field of cultural and social studies. In 2021, it took place online. On April 21 and 22, seventeen young researchers shared the results of their own studies. As always, for most of the participants it was a debut in research conferences, where they could give a presentation in front of the experienced, strict, but attentive and welcoming academics. More experienced young cultural researchers, in their turn, gained another great opportunity to present their work. Several academic and student organizations formed an organizing committee of the conference, including the Estonian Literary Museum (the Department of Folkloristics and the Estonian Folklore Archives), the Estonian National Museum, the Tartu NEFA Group, and the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore of the University of Tartu. Working languages of the Young Voices conference were Estonian and English.

Topics, approaches, and areas of research were so diverse that it was not possible to figure out a single direction that would unite all the presentations. However, the organizers skilfully arranged them into several panels. During these two days, the participants of the conference were discussing such research issues as the second life of folklore, digitalization and contemporary culture, transition of experience, gender, nationalism, community building, division between nature and culture, sport, and health. Many panel sessions created intensive, professional discussions – something that is indeed important for the first probes of making their research public.

The panel presentations were preceded by a fascinating keynote lecture by Professor Kristin Kuutma, titled "A Pilgrim's Progress: A Disciplinary Journey Inside/Outside Academia", and were accompanied by a fruitful roundtable "Kultuuriuurija kujunemine: kust tulevad ja kuhu lähevad (noored) teadlased?" (The formation of a cultural researcher: Where do the (young) researchers come from and where do they go?). Both events can be considered as a career-orienting guidance. Professor Kuutma chose her personal career history to explain how academic and non-academic professional experiences might be combined in a single, meaningful professional pathway. By her personal example, she showed that academic expertise could be useful outside the academia, while the non-academic skills might and should be applied in the research areas. Similarly,

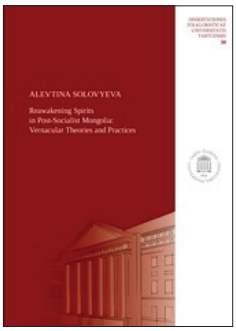
the roundtable provided a number of examples of building a career for young researchers in cultural studies.

Five presentations were recognized by awards from the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies (CEES); I would like to name some of them. A paper by Arabella Antons under the heading "Küllalt naiste rikkumisest võistlusspordiga": Eesti naiste sport 1920–1940 ("Enough of women's disfigurement in competitive sport": Estonian women's sport in 1920–1940) won an award as the best basic school presentation. A nomination for gymnasiums was taken by Valentina Drianichkina and Agnia Andreeva with their presentation of a folklore application that they had developed themselves (Zoomorphisms in the Russian, Estonian and Chinese Languages and the Development of a Thematic Application). The best work by a bachelor's and a master's student came from Hildegard Reimann, "Folkloristlik joonistus – alternatiivne viis kogeda ja kirjeldada?" (A folkloristic drawing: An alternative way to learn and describe?) and from Chahal Garg, "Crafting Digital", respectively.

To conclude, I hope that the 2021 Young Voices conference proved to be a meaningful and useful experience for all the participants, and indeed became the first step towards a successful career as young researchers and professionals.

Danila Rygovskiy
University of Tartu

DOCTORAL THESIS ON VERNACULAR THEORIES AND PRACTICES



Alevtina Solovyeva. ***Reawakening Spirits in Post-socialist Mongolia: Vernacular Theories and Practices. Dissertationes Folkloristicae Universitatis Tartuensis*** **30. University of Tartu Press, 2021. 203 pp.**

Alevtina Solovyeva's PhD thesis, defended on 7 May 2021, provides a detailed and insightful depiction of Mongolian people's relationships with a host of invisible beings nowadays, in the context of a rapidly changing society experiencing intense urbanisation and post-socialist turbulent deregulation policies. As the end of a Soviet-inspired and controlled repressive regime gave way to a religious renaissance throughout Mongolia at the beginning of the 1990s, all sorts of previously suppressed or silenced entities started to interfere in people's daily activities, both in

the mushrooming capital-city Ulaanbaatar, where more and more "ghosts" (*chötgör*) are rumoured to appear, and in rural areas where pastoral livelihoods depend on proper relations with irritable spiritual "land masters" (*gazryn ezed*, *lus savdag*).

Documenting the irruption of various entities (called "supernatural") in Mongolian post-socialist cultural, social, and political landscape, Alevtina Solovyeva's purpose is to show how a "lived religion" comes to be collectively created by the Mongolian population nowadays. An impressive corpus of narratives collected for no less than fourteen years, between 2006 and 2020, in urban and rural areas across the country, allows the author to account for changing beliefs concerning the nature, powers or modes of actions of these entities (their ontology), but also to describe what kinds of specialists are trusted to act as mediators with them. Alevtina Solovyeva therefore provides a rich description of the proliferating variety of beings that are featured in people's accounts of encounters with the invisible, showing how they reveal both a decisive continuity in Mongolian ontological traditions, and a porosity of these ideas to the changing contexts of urban and rural society. On the other hand, these narratives testify to changing attitudes towards people trusted to act as intermediaries with these invisible and unpredictable beings: after a period of multiplication in the religious offer, there is a tendency for specialists – both shamans and Buddhist practitioners – towards professionalisation. The population has grown suspicious about their abilities and are more and more prone to evaluate them according to criteria that clearly transpire from narratives collected by the author.

What Alevtina Solovyeva means to show throughout her thesis, in the four published articles reproduced here as well as in the long introduction preceding them, is that Mongolian beliefs and practices concerning "spirits" and "the supernatural" are in constant flux, insofar as they reflect Mongolia's changing situation and the population's shifting concerns. In the introduction, the candidate dwells on the recurrent motif of spirits' "awakening" in Mongolian folktales, which has been employed since the end of the socialist regime to account for the political and economic hardships experienced by the country. The candidate shows that the idea of angered spirits is far from new in Mongolian history, yet has been adapted in different periods to situations where a gap or a sense of mismatch between a community and its "homeland" (*nutag*) became a matter of concern. Similarly, the popular motif of "moving lights" seen in the steppe and associated in the past with the "bone soul" of dead people whose bodies were laid out in the open, according to Mongolian funerary customs, are now associated with remnants of the Russian presence on Mongolian land (they are seen as ghostly headlights of Russian cars). Several examples of such reinterpretations of traditional motifs of Mongolian folklore are provided in the introduction, but it is actually in the four attached articles that the most telling examples are provided.

In the first article, "An immured soul: Contested ritual traditions and demonological narratives in contemporary Mongolia", Alevtina Solovyeva discusses the motif of *güideltei gazar*, or *gazryn* güits, that is, "haunted" or "restless places". These places

are characterised by an element of *stuckness*, that is, people unwittingly crossing them become stuck, their horses stopping abruptly, their cars or motorcycles breaking down for no apparent reason. The candidate thus draws a parallel between the state of the interred and immured bones (which are effectively "stuck" in the soil) and the effect of these places on people (who also become stuck), interpreting this narrative as a reaction to the reform of Mongolian funerary rituals. The author argues that while Mongols "traditionally" leave their dead parents' remains scattered in the open, the socialist government has imposed inhumation, therefore jeopardizing the fate of dead people's souls. On the other hand, there is a long tradition in Mongolian folkloric traditions of burying demons and other harmful beings in the ground, therefore *sticking* them to prevent their malevolent actions. According to Alevtina Solovyeva, the transposition of demonological stuckness to these "restless places" could therefore be an adaptative reaction to the authoritative intervention on proper funerals.

In the second article, "*Chötgöriin yaria* in the 21st century: Mongolian demonological beliefs and mass culture in the age of globalization", Alevtina Solovyeva provides another, more obvious example of the evolving character of Mongolian folkloric motifs under the influence of mass media and globalisation. The paper gives an overview of a new form of demonological narrative, ghost tales, inspired by the success of the supernatural genre in Russian and American pop-culture. They take many forms in many contexts, and this flexibility is key to their success, but they revolve around one main character *chötgör*, that is, "ghosts". These "ghosts" feature in anecdotes (published as collections), city entertainment, and cinema productions. While they reflect the influence of foreign themes, like the world-wide folkloric blockbuster of the "vanishing hitchhiker", they also take stock of traditional Mongolian themes, such as the association of ghosts with anything "empty", and they tap into localised collective memories. One very interesting aspect of "ghosts" and of these "ghost tales" is that they have no problem transposing themselves to the city, while other invisible beings such as spiritual land masters (*lus savdag*) have difficulties to take root in the cities and remain attached to people's *nutag*.

The third article, "Mythological world of Mongolian charms", deals with ritual poetry and the manifold contexts of its performance by lay-people, professional or not. The common principle to all these genres of ritual speech is the power of the spoken word, which is derived not only from the semantic content of the formula, but also the quality of its enunciation and the number of times it is uttered. The example of "praises" (*magtaal*) and "wishes" (*yeröөl*) shows how these genres are porous to the particular context of their performance, inasmuch as performers are expected to include elements (people, appliances, events) from their immediate surroundings. These instances of ritual poetry thus function as fantastic devices of *integration* of a heterogenous and at times contradictory situation into a skilfully unified utterance. They indeed illustrate perfectly how narrative genres may both reflect changing conditions *and* act to help people adapting themselves to them.

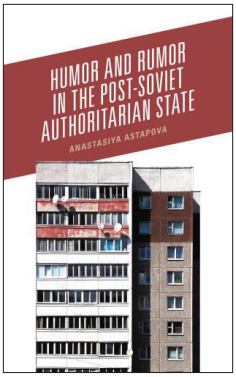
The fourth and last article, co-written with Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz, "From the Tibetan burial ground to the Mongolian steppe: A new life for Buddhist ritual practice in post-socialist Mongolia", gives an original and extremely interesting account of the *lüijin* ritual, in which adepts offer their body as a feast to deities and demons. Originating from Tibet a thousand years ago or so, this ritual has been known in Mongolian Buddhism (mostly of the "red" faith) since the 14th century at least, but it has encountered a vivid interest on the part of the Mongolian population since the end of the socialist period. One of the reasons for this success is certainly the extraordinary flexibility of this ritual, for the performance of which great latitude is given to adepts (it can be carried out independently or in an assembly, indoors in a monastery or in haunted grounds, for a group of people or for an individual, etc.). But a deeper and more interesting reason for its success may be that, as an exorcism ritual, it answers some of the pressing concerns of the Mongolian population, most of all in Ulaanbaatar. There is indeed a way in which *lüijin* rituals help new city-dwellers find their footing in these environments teeming with various indiscernible and potentially harmful influences: malicious gossip, curses, remnants of former residents, possibly foreign and possibly even associated with a traumatising collective history of colonisation. The *lüijin* ritual, in this kind of situation, bears the promise of a clean slate – not an empty one, but a dwelling space efficaciously "cut off" from all harmful influences, and therefore available for prosperity.

This last chapter, in my opinion one of the best in the thesis, thus helps clarify what the rest of the thesis points toward, and what in my opinion is the most stimulating insight in Alevtina Solovyeva's research so far. The folkloric motifs and the ritual practices she describes, drawing on the narratives she has been collecting throughout Mongolia over the past fifteen years, are not only an *illustration* of Mongolian culture and people's faculty to adapt to changing situations – economic, social, politic, or religious. Ghosts, spirits, and protocols designed to enter in relation with them are indeed the very *means* through which Mongolian people change their society; if they are indeed "traditions" (that is, transmitted from one generation to the next), they are also vectors of modernity and the vessels in which Mongolian people, whether in rural or urban areas, travel through time. Thus, they live in cities through *lüijin* rituals, they integrate mass media through ghost tales, they homogenise an heterogenous contemporaneity through ritual poetry, and they deal with changing funerals through their horses' reactions. What I think should be highlighted in Alevtina Solovyeva's thesis is the idea and concrete demonstration that folkloric motifs and narratives about the invisible are not only a *reflection* of their social or natural environment, but also a *means of action*. They are, quite literally, a way of efficiently inhabiting an ever-changing world.

Grégory Delaplace

BOOK REVIEW

JOKING ABOUT THE FEAR OF JOKING



Anastasiya Astapova. *Humor and Rumor in the Post-Soviet Authoritarian State.* Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021. 184 pp.

Anastasiya Astapova is a Belarusian scholar with a specialisation in humour and folklore studies. The reviewed book titled *Humor and Rumor in the Post-Soviet Authoritarian State* (2021) is based on her doctoral dissertation, "Negotiating Belarussianness: Political Folklore betwixt and between", which she defended at the University of Tartu in 2015. Although the data was collected over five years ago, in her book the author manages to actualise the discussion of classic Belarusian political jokes in the current situation by adding a preface addressing the political changes and making connections to the recent events in conclusion. These slight edits transform the book from a mere thesis adaptation into a reconsideration of the topic timely published during the wake of protests and repressions in Belarus. The political framing is present even on the book's cover – white background with a crimson stripe on it resembles the Belarusian national white-red-white flag used by the opposition. The same colour combination can be seen on the facade of the socialist building also depicted on the cover. This iconic architecture creates a visual connection to the post-Soviet everyday reality, expanding the context of the discussion to all post-Soviet countries. However, the main focus of the book remains on Belarus.

The 184-page book consists of six chapters that can be perceived as interconnected but independent parts. Additionally, there is a preface, acknowledgements, notes on transliteration and translation, conclusion, references, index, and the section about the author. It is an easy-to-read book that does not lose its scholarly depth for the sake of understandable writing. The book is based on the materials collected during ethnographic fieldwork of seven years with Belarusian diasporas and people inside the country. It offers quite an exhaustive overview of informal negotiation of political life in an authoritarian country. It raises and partly answers a whole set of questions: "Why do people in authoritarian states need humour and neglect the risk of punishment to make jokes? How do people align with or oppose state policies and practices in non-democratic regimes? What is their attitude toward the authoritarian leader, and why do they conform to his rule?" (p. 2).

The author starts the introduction with a quote of a Soviet joke from a book by a Nobel Prize-winning Belarusian writer Svetlana Alexievich. From the very beginning, it links

the Soviet legacy and the Belarusian regime, emphasising their similarity. This creates a good intro, as in this book Belarusian post-Soviet political humour and rumour are not analysed in isolation but are put in a temporal and local continuum – as they are compared to other examples of similar folklore of different times and countries. It is very important and convenient that Astapova provides a short but descriptive excursion into Belarusian history and political context in the introduction. It helps the reader to get acquainted with the country's background to understand, at least partly, prehistory and conditions for the emergence of political folklore described in the book. On page 4, she even provides a table of the main dates in Belarusian history starting from the ninth century and until 2020. Of course, it is a skim list, but it helps a foreign reader place Belarus and its folk on the axis of European history. Two types of political folklore are discussed in this book: rumours and jokes. Negotiation of both genres in one book helps to demonstrate how "their plots and functions intertwine up to the point of being indiscernible" (p. 11), presenting them as manifestations of one socio-political phenomenon. Despite putting them together, Astapova discusses them separately, in different chapters that can be perceived and understood independently. Some of the chapters were previously published as separate scholarly articles (Astapova 2016; 2017a; 2017b).

Although the first chapter's heading, "Why Does the Jelly Tremble? Surveillance Rumors and the Vernacular Panopticon", refers to a joke, it is primarily dedicated to exploring surveillance and persecution rumours. In this chapter, Astapova discusses the contextualisation peculiarities of international rumour plots to the Belarusian reality. Jokes are not a mere coping with stress, but they also serve as a constant reminder of the constant surveillance. She claims that recognising surveillance rumours is necessary for understanding the context in which political jokes appear and explaining the fear of joking and people's hesitance to share some information even with a researcher. Discussing the special services' never-ending surveillance helps to understand on what principles this regime is based and connects the panel of jokes with the Foucauldian idea of the panopticon (Foucault 2007). Another interesting point is that she also discusses mixing rumours of general surveillance with traditional prejudice and beliefs. Her analysis of jokes is fascinating. She does not study them in isolation as a unique phenomenon, but maps them temporarily by making connections to the Soviet culture of political anecdotes. She also creates a horizontal understanding of transitions, plot exchanges and archetypes of jokes and rumours between different undemocratic regimes around the globe.

This interconnectivity is explored in the second chapter, "Why Do All Dictators Have Moustaches? Political Jokes in the Authoritarian State". In this chapter, Astapova analyses 140 joke texts she collected from Belarusians during her field research. She illustrates how these jokes are related to socialist and Soviet humour and reveals that the majority of modern Belarusian jokes focus on the presidential figure and how they resemble many other jokes about dictators.

The third chapter, "Joking about the Fear (of Joking)" discusses the jokes about political persecution in everyday communication, as well as narrative and conversational *metajoking*. Metajoking is "referencing other political jokes while joking or joking about the fear of joking" (p. 16). Understanding this phenomenon helps to understand how and why people in authoritarian regimes continue making political jokes despite the threat of persecution. Moreover, this chapter sheds light on the reasons behind the political passivity of Belarusians, which already became notorious. For an outsider, it might be unclear why people remain passive and silent when their rights are violated. However, with careful study of fear expressions in the form of jokes and rumours, Astapova opens up people's motifs for absenteeism and sedentary citizen behaviour.

Chapter 4, "The Making of the President: Lukashenko's Official Image and Vernacular Ridicule", examines the construction of the biography and paternalist image of Alexander Lukashenko. To present a bilateral picture of his image, Astapova discusses widespread reactions and the rich folklore created in response to this presidential image. She explains how certain biographical elements become significant both for the official promotion and folk criticism of the president. Astapova also addresses how dictatorships survive and adapt to people's new demands by deconstructing Lukashenko's image. This analysis helps to understand better what type of public needs he fulfils. For instance, she connects jokes about his inability to speak any language with people's demand to have a president who would bridge national language with the Russian-speaking world. But this is just one of the examples. In particular, she deconstructs the rumours about Lukashenko being a firm leader and a powerful, sexually active masculine figure. Finally, she discusses how these rumours are created and what functions they serve.

Chapter 5, "When the President Comes: Potemkin Villages", addresses the rumours about the special preparations that occur when Lukashenko visits a town or a village in Belarus. The author employs the Potemkin facades' concept to describe how Lukashenko's regime functions. Showing people's vernacular attitudes to this order of things and rules of behaviour, she suggests that "these flawless performances do not only target Lukashenko but also other observers. More than that, the drive to achieve flawlessness, so essential in the interaction between Lukashenko and his people, spreads beyond the political performances and becomes the foundation of Belarusian everyday life" (p. 115). This chapter describes well the reality in which hundreds of thousands of workers in state-owned enterprises lived. This part of the book helps to understand why the strike of the state factories' workers was so important for the protests in 2020, both for economic and symbolic reasons. In 2020, the viral video of Lukashenko talking to a crowd of factory workers that chant "Go away!" marked the end of the Potemkinist reality in Belarus; eventually, he had to face real people that were not preselected for the meeting.

The closing chapter 6, "There is a High Probability of the Mustachioed Dude's Victory: Election without Choice", addresses the online and offline rumours about the falsification of elections in Belarus. It is an excellent choice to put this discussion at the end of the

book, as it draws a line, demonstrating the interconnection of humour and rumour – how they can blend so closely that sometimes it is impossible to distinguish them. Anastasiya Astapova says this in the book, and it is important to reiterate in this review that the functions of political folklore can sometimes be contradictory; for instance, Scott's (2008) claims that jokes create a counter-narrative to the official culture. Behind any ideological hegemony, a 'public transcript', there is a hidden transcript that consists of various forms of disagreement and anti-hegemonic thinking and behaviour. But it is important to understand that apart from being a form of political resistance that undermines and erodes the authoritarian regime, its other function is to normalise the regime and help people adapt to the challenges. This allows the regime to hold on for a more extended period of time. And this is what Astapova profoundly negotiates in her book.

This book is an excellent introduction to Belarusian reality. It allows to understand how the regime and the Belarusian people existed before the wave of protests in 2020. For an external reader, it may explain the absurd and strange traits of Belarusian contemporary political culture. For the internal reader, not exclusively Belarusian but also a post-Soviet, this is an opportunity to have an estranged look at the familiar reality and understand how the constituent parts of political folklore are interconnected, that they are not just jokes, but essential elements of the system with their own functions. The book can undoubtedly be recommended for reading to those who know very little about Belarus and those who are already immersed in the context. Due to the fact that the discussion of jokes about politics touches various topics, this book can serve as a kind of sightseeing tour of modern Belarus.

However, the focus in this book, as well as in the Belarusian political folklore, is shifted to the figure of the dictator Lukashenko. Astapova writes (p. 16):

> *As I demonstrate starting from the very first chapter, most jokes and rumours concentrate around the authoritarian figure of the Belarusian president, and most of the following chapters will evolve around his image. Rather than repressing victims, most authoritarian regimes nowadays rely on making their key figures look competent via a repertoire of propaganda techniques to manipulate citizens' beliefs.*

Thus, the socio-political reality of the whole country in this optics is reduced to Lukashenko and the popular reactions to his figure. This describes only a part of reality – how people adapt to the official culture. But this is certainly not everything worthy of discussion in today's Belarus. A significant layer of social and political life is excluded from the picture, and in this concern, the book represents the authoritarian regime rather than the country itself. This is a drawback if the goal is to immerse into the Belarusian reality. But for the aims set in the book, Astapova has done a brilliant job. The study finished in 2015 was published in the form of a manuscript after the protests of 2020, which attracted the attention of the world community to Belarus. This connection, as

it can be supposed, can draw additional attention to this book, and it is deserved since this book, through the study of political folklore, talks about the political structure of the country until 2020. The regime's peculiarities that were discussed in rumours and joked about led to such massive protests and an unprecedented level of political repression, violence, and torture. The understanding of what terror was hidden behind all these hilarious jokes provokes intense emotions and provides additional aspects to consider while reading.

Elisabeth Kovtiak
Charles University

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